

PRINT POWER AND CENSORSHIP IN COLONIAL INDONESIA, 1914-1942

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This dissertation examines the relation between censorship and print culture in colonial Indonesia. In the Dutch East Indies, censorship was primarily a political measure to deal with print culture, print power, and political activism. While it reflected the potency of the colonial state, it was not practiced exclusively in repressive ways, but manifested in many constructive programs and regulations to achieve comparable objectives. It oscillated between the liberal impulses of the colonial regime and its intrinsic insecurity. My research reveals that censorship in fact facilitated the development of print culture and print power in the Indies, rather than inhibited it. Conversely, in the course of its development, the Indies print culture came to shape state censorship. This dissertation investigates how and under what mechanism this symbiotic relationship took shape.

More specifically, this dissertation draws attention to the fact that under the colonial censorship, newspapers, periodicals, and popular literature in the Malay language flourished in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Such vernacular media in turn helped stimulate and facilitate the Indies' conception of self, from which the so-called national awakening arose, all the while accomplishing its fundamental purpose to entertain an audience in an ever-changing colonial society. It was also thanks to censorship that popular literature became a political theater as a uniquely indigenous-based literary genre called *roman pitjisan* emerged, peddling Islamism and nationalism as entertainment.

This inquiry also reveals that Indies censorship operated depending on internal

and external political conditions. Domestic security threat and international structural change affected the types and rationales of censorship in the Indies. Changes in censorship essentially moved to one direction, that is a tighter one; yet, they simultaneously opened up new possibilities for print power to gain more popular supports. On their part, journalists and political activists were able to adapt, even took advantage of censoring mechanism. Ultimately, censorship affected the way print culture was formulated and gained “sovereign” power in colonial Indonesia.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

YAMAMOTO Nobuto was born in Chiba, Japan, in 1963. He obtained B. A. in Political Science from Keio University, Tokyo, Japan, in 1987, and M. A. in International Studies from Sophia University, Tokyo, in 1989. In the same year, he began a doctoral program at Government Department, Cornell University. In 1994 he joined the Faculty of Law and Politics, Keio University, and currently is Professor of Southeast Asian Studies at the Department of Political Science.

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My fifteen-year long leave of absence required me to change my committee in 2009. Peter served as the chairperson after Ben retired; Ben remained as a member; since Takashi has left for Japan, Thomas Pepinsky joined the committee; and finally Eric Tagolicozzo became the external reader. Both Tom and Eric encouraged and supported me in various ways in the course of my writing in Ithaca.

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Parts of earlier versions of this dissertation have been presented at various

conferences and workshops; the International Association of Historians of Asia in Tokyo (1996), Bangkok (1998), Manila (2004); the 21st Annual Conference, Center for Southeast Asia Studies, University of California, Berkeley (2004); Netherlands Institute for War Documentation Indonesian Chinese Afternoon Meetings (NICAM) International Workshop in Amsterdam (2007), Kyoto Center for Southeast Asian Studies - Netherlands Institute for War Documentation Joint International Workshop in Kyoto (2008), and Asian Studies Conference Japan in Tokyo (2009). I appreciate the comments from participants at these conferences and workshops.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARD	Dienst der Algemeene Recherche (General Investigation Service)
Algemeen	Algemeen Overzicht van de Inlandsche pers (General Summary of the Indigenous Press)
AMS	Algemene Middelbare School (General Middle School)
Aneta	Algemeen Nieuws en Telegraaf Agentschap (Netherlands Indies news agency)
BB	Binnenlandsch Bestuur (Interior Administration, the European Civil Service)
Beschouwingen	Beschouwingen over de Chineesche en de Maleisch-Chineesche Pers (General Review of Chinese and Chinese-Malay Press)
CHH	Chung Hwa Hui (Chinese Association)
Comintern	Communist International
ELS	Europeesche Lagere Scholen (European Primary Schools)
Gerindo	Gerakan Rakyat Indonesia (Indonesian People's Movement)
GG	Gouverneur-Generaal (Governor-General)
HBS	Hollandsche Burger Scholen (Dutch Middle Schools)
HIS	Hollandsche Inlandsche Scholen (Dutch-Indigenous Schools)
HPH	Himpunan Pemuda Islam Indonesia (Muslim Youth Alliance)
IM	Indonesia Moeda (Young Indonesia)
IPO	Overzicht van de Inlandsche Pers (Survey of Indigenous Press) or Overzicht van de Inlandsche en Maleisch-Chineesche Pers (Survey of Indigenous and Chinese-Malay Press)
ISDV	Indische Sociaal Democratische Vereniging (Indies Social Democratic Association)

MCC	Overzichten van de Maleisch-Chineesche en Chineesche Pers (Survey of Chinese-Malay and Chinese Press)
MULO	Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs (Advanced Primary Education)
OSVIA	Opleiding School Voor Inlandsche Ambtenaren (Training School for Civil Servants)
Pari	Partai Republik Indonsia (Republic of Indonesia Party)
Parindra	Partai Indonesia Raya (Great Indonesia Party)
Partindo	Partai Indonesia (Indonesian Party)
PBI	Persatoean Bangsa Indonesia (Association of Indonesian Nation)
PBKI	Persatoean Boeroeh Kareta-Api Indonesia (Railway Workers Union)
Permi	Persatuan Muslimin Indonesia (Union of Indonesian Muslims)
persbreidel	Persbreidelordonnantie (Press Curbing Ordinance)
PG	Procureur Generaal (Prosecutor General)
PI	Partai Indonesia (Indonesian Party) or Persatoean Indonesia (Indonesian Union) or Perhimpoean Indonesia (Indonesian [Students'] Association) or Persatoean Islam (United Islam) or Pendidikan Islam (Islamic Education)
PID	Politieke Inlichtingendienst (Political Information Service)
PKI	Perhimpoean Komunis di India (Communist Association of the Indies); after June 1924 Partai Komunis Indonesia (Communist Party of Indonesia)
PMI	Persatoean Moeslim Indonesia (Association of Indonesian Muslim)
PNI	Partai Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian Nationalist Party) or Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Education) – PNI Baru (New PNI)

PPO	Politiek-Politieel Overzicht (Political Policing Survey)
PPPI	Perhimpunan Peladjar Peladjar Indonesia (Association of Indonesian Students)
PSII	Partai Sarikat Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic League Party)
PTI	Partai Tionghoa Indonesia (Indonesian Chinese Party)
SI	Sarekat Islam (Islamic Association)
SR	Sarekat Rakjat (People's Association)
STOVIA	School tot Opleiding van Inlandsche Artsen (Training College for Native Doctors)
THHK	Tiong Hwa Hwee Koan (Chinese Association)
VSTP	Vereeniging voor Spoor-en Tramweg Personeel (Association for Railway and Tramway Personnel)

NOTE ON SPELLING

Since this dissertation deals with colonial Indonesia, in order to preserve the historical flavor, as much as possible I use the original spelling of proper names or words as they appear in newspapers, journals, and other primary sources. The city of Surabaya, for instance, is variably spelled as “Soerabaia,” “Soerabaija,” “Soerabaja,” “Sourabaya,” and, according to the most recent Indonesian spelling system, “Surabaya.” These seemingly inconsistencies are not however typographical error.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On July 1, 1940, *Sin Tit Po*, a local but rather influential newspaper in the Dutch Indies carried a brief report on an ongoing trial process of a press offence case.¹ From the report we learn that, just the day before, an associate editor of a minor Soerabaja-based journal *Angkatan Baroe*, Moehamad Choesnan Effendi, had been sentenced to three months in jail by the local lower criminal court. Effendi's "offence" was the publication in his journal's February 1939 issue of two poems commemorating Prince Diponegoro, the Javanese aristocrat who had led a rebellion against the Dutch colonial authorities in the early nineteenth century.

Setting aside the negligible standing of *Angkatan Baroe*, or the fact that the "offensive" item consisted of two poems rather than a blistering editorial attack on the government, the trial of Effendi and the subsequent verdict was remarkable. It tells us not only about the inherent paranoia of a colonial government, but also about the mechanicality of the state censoring apparatus. The timing of the trial says it all. The incriminating poems had been published 16 months prior to the verdict. They were not under criminal investigation in 1939, and yet the prosecutor only brought their author to trial in 1940. In the meantime, there was no report about any disturbance caused by their publication, nor was there any notable sign that their contents had affected the people of Soerabaja. During those months, the Indies had spent relatively calm days, while the outside world had changed drastically. By the time of the verdict, the imperial motherland Holland had gone to war and been paralyzed for more than a month. On May 10, the Nazi Germany had launched an attack on the

¹ "Persdelict 'Angkatan Baroe': Terdakwa di Hoekoem 3 Boelan Pendjara," *Sin Tit Po*, July 1, 1940.

Netherlands and Belgium and quickly overran them. On May 14, the Luftwaffe bombed Rotterdam, the Netherlands' second largest city, and the very next day, that is, within a week from the initial attack, the country had fallen into Germany's hands, except for the province of Zeeland. When the imperial metropole was about to collapse, one wonders what the Indies government was doing penalizing a journalist for two poems.

Meanwhile, all literate people in the vast Dutch colony were well aware of what was happening in the Netherlands. On the day of the Rotterdam bombing, the same daily *Sin Tit Po* blared a headline about "Germany going on a rampage in the Netherlands" (*memboeasnja Djerman di Nederland*).² The defeat of the Netherlands by Nazi Germany obviously shocked the administrators of the Indies, as well as its residents regardless of race.³ Yet the censorship apparatus still managed to get a hold of and process Effendi's 16 months-old, seemingly harmless, poems. This demonstrates the tedious and mechanical aspects of state censorship that continued business as usual, and at the same time showed it to be an expedient device a time of crisis.

Such persistence of censorial practices in the Indies raises a number of key questions that animate this dissertation: How do we understand censorship in the colonial context? Why was it such an enduring feature of the Indies colonial state? What types of censorship were devised in the Indies and what were the rationales behind each one? How did censorship affect the Indies society, in particular the indigenous press that was the main target of colonial censorship? Finally, did it

² "Pers Belanda di Indonesia dan memboeasnja Djerman di Nederland," *Sin Tit Po*, May 14, 1940. The article added that in order to support the military in the motherland, some Dutch newspapers in the Indies had organized fund raisings.

³ Interestingly, after May 1940 the colonial authorities basically did not tolerate anti-government pestering by Indonesians, which might further intensify their anxiety.

successfully contain anti-colonial discourse and effectively impede emancipatory progress?

The basic answer to the first two questions may be obvious; colonial governments utilized censorship because they generally did not have any traditional legitimacy, thus needed perpetually to ward off attempts to undermine their authority. It is usually understood that censorship is as a natural function of power; those who are in power exercise their political, legal, economic, and physical strength to define the limits of what could be publicly expressed and distributed. The Indies government made no secret of its censorship, even if its implementation was arbitrary and unpredictable as much as it was mechanical. But the variation in censorial institutions and performances was immense, and hence the political consequences of censorship varied. Colonial states did not practice censorship exclusively in repressive ways, but took many “constructive measures” to shape public opinion.

In the twentieth century colonial Indonesia, or the Netherlands Indies, censorship was primarily a political machine to shape print culture, print power, and political activism. By print culture, I mean all forms of printed material circulating in a certain (national/colonial) territory, which helps create a sense of community; whereas with print power I refer to the hegemonic power that print culture enjoys with the support of popular audience. Print power is relatively independent from the state power, thus the necessity to regulate it. In this regard, print culture can serve as an arena where state/official and private sectors compete, by communicating their respective agenda. My dissertation defines censorship as a political institution that brings about specific cultural expressions; as such it primarily involves regulating what is allowed and/or desired to be expressed and what is not. In the context of sovereign states, censorship may be utilized as part of a “nation” building effort. As Richard Burt puts it, censorship is “productive as well as prohibitive; it involve(s)

cultural legitimation as well as delegitimation.”⁴ In its narrow and legal sense, censorship means the prevention by official action of the circulation of discourse deemed unfavorable by the government, usually in the form of text, image, and speech. In a broader sense censorship refers to the use of state resources to create social expressions that are favorable to the government, either by repressive or constructive means, in order to influence public perception. It encompasses instances where the media willfully select certain narratives over others, in order to conform not only to existing press codes, but also, as this dissertation will demonstrate, “market demands” that arise out of censorship itself.

Literature Review

Existing literature concerning Indies censorship, which is scarce, tends to characterize it as repressive. In general, there are three different approaches to it. The first school has accentuated the repressive aspect of censorship in the 1930s. It argues that the Indies government employed administrative measures to contain unfavorable vernacular press. As the American sociologist and anthropologist Raymond Kennedy observed, “The censorship laws of the Indies have been almost unbelievable in their repressiveness.”⁵ A Dutch historian J. M. Pluvier affirmed this view by stressing the fact that the Indonesian nationalist movement was essentially contained and major political leaders were exiled to prison camps.⁶ He used the 1931 press-curbing ordinance as an indicator of the repressive policy towards Indonesian political

⁴ Richard Burt, “(Un)Censoring in Detail: The Fetish of Censorship in the Early Modern Past and the Postmodern Present,” in Robert Post (ed.), *Censorship and Silencing: Practices of Cultural Regulation* (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1998), p. 17.

⁵ Raymond Kennedy, “Dutch Plan for the Indies,” *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 15, No. 7 (April 10, 1946), p. 101.

⁶ J. M. Pluvier, *Overzichten van de Ontwikkeling der Nationalistische Beweging in Indonesië in de Jaren 1930 tot 1942* (’s-Gravenhage and Bandung: N. V. Uitgeverij W. van Hoeve, 1953). See also Hong Lee Oey, *Indonesian Government and Press during Guided Democracy* (Zug, Switzerland: Inter Documentation, 1971), which touches upon the press curbing ordinance as the line of repressive censorship in Indonesian history.

activism. With this ordinance, major radical Indonesian papers were temporarily suspended and their associated political parties suffered setbacks in their activities. This view however overemphasizes the repressive censorship in the first half of the 1930s, and hence neglects the overall picture of Indies censorship, which went through changes several times over nearly a century since the middle of the nineteenth century.

The second school looks at Indies censorship in terms of cultural hegemony. It draws attention to the intention and activity of the Bureau for Popular Literature,⁷ a cultural project initiated by the colonial government from 1917. This view is generally shared by literary scholars on colonial Indonesia. Based on reports by the Bureau and accounts by its directors,⁸ they have maintained that the Bureau successfully established hegemony in the Malay language publications.⁹ In this regard the Bureau certainly embodied constructive censorship.¹⁰ But the problem with this view lies in its overemphasis on policy designs. For instance, literary scholar Hendrik Maier contends that the Bureau denigrated Chinese-Malay publications as trashy literature, and by so doing marginalized this literature.¹¹ Such a view evidently overlooks the fact that the Chinese-Malay “trashy” literature dominated the publishing

⁷ A. Teeuw, *Modern Indonesian Literature* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967) is the classic study on the contribution of the Bureau in establishing Indonesian national literature.

⁸ D. A. Rinkes, *Nota over de Volkslectuur* (Batavia: Volkslectuur, 1911); D. A. Rinkes, “Volkslectuur,” in *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië* (Tweede druk) (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1921), pp. 610-612; G. W. J. Drewes, *The Bureau of Popular Literature of Netherlands India: What It Is and What It Does* (Weltevreden: Kantoor voor de Volkslectuur, 1930); G. W. J. Drewes, “Balali Pustaka and Its Antecedents,” in Nigel Phillips and Khaidir Anwar (eds.), *Papers on Indonesian Language and Literature* (London: The Indonesian Etymological Project, 1981); K. A. H. Hidding, “The Bureau for Popular Literature,” *Bulletin of the Colonial Institute of Amsterdam*, 1-3 (1938), pp. 185-194.

⁹ Pramodya Ananta Toer, “Balai Pustaka harum namanja didunia internasional-dahulu,” *Star Weekly*, No. 580 (February 9, 1957), pp. 10-11; Hilmar Farid Setiadi, “Kolonialisme dan Budaya, Balai Pustaka di Hindia Belanda,” *Prisma* (October 1991), pp. 23-41; Doris Jedamski, “Balai Pustaka: A Colonial Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing,” *Archipel*, No. 44 (1992), pp. 23-46.

¹⁰ Intriguingly, literary scholars in the 1990s used the term hegemony instead of censorship. This reflects the strength of Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, but because of it I would argue, those scholars overlook the reality concerning Malay print culture.

¹¹ Hendrik Maier, “Forms of Censorship in the Dutch Indies: The Marginalization of Chinese-Malay Literature,” *Indonesia, special issue* (1990), pp. 67-81.

market in the 1910s and 30s, precisely when the Bureau self-proclaimed a cultural hegemony over the literary market.¹²

The third school focuses on the discussion of press freedom in the Indies. Historically, around the time when the Indies state implemented the first censorship law in 1854, Dutch politicians were debating whether or not they should introduce press freedom in the colony. At the same time, they also considered potentially growing insecurity in the colonial society to be a likely by-product of press freedom. Such anxieties and expectations among policy-makers are nicely captured by historian Mirjam Maters' pioneering work on censorship.¹³ By tracing closely the policy debates over nearly a century, she rightly points out the fact that while Dutch politicians introduced the Ethical Policy to improve indigenous welfare, leading to the promotion of the indigenous vernacular press in the early twentieth century, they continued discussing how to monitor those press and contain them in case they posed a threat to social order. Maters however does not thoroughly examine the reality of policy implementation. This leaves many questions unanswered, in particular how Indies censorship and press monitoring dealt with growing number of the Malay publications and press.

The existing literature, albeit very valuable, has shortcomings that have to do with the analysis of the policy process. They convincingly analyze the political intentions of the policy elite, but this disproportionate focus on policy creates a problem with existing studies on Indies censorship. Generally, policy is developed in response to the (potential) existence of a perceived problem. Who identifies the problem, why and how something is conceived as problem, all determine the

¹² Armijn Pané, "Het Chineesch-Maleisch en het Indonesisch," *Sin Po* (weekblad), November 30, 1935; Balai Pustaka, *Balai Pustaka Sewadjarnja 1908-1942* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1948), p. 29.

¹³ Mirjam Maters, *Van zachte wenk tot harde hand: persvrijheid en persbreidel in Nederlands-Indië, 1906-1942* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1998).

characteristics of a certain policy. Unexpected policy outcomes that shape new perceived problems then require another round of policy debate. Thus policy makers select particular issues and make policy the priority. This policy priority creates an imagined reality among the policy elite, which sometimes paves the way for political opportunities for their opponents. By focusing on the policy process, the existing literature on censorship has overlooked an undeniable fact that the Malay print culture actually flourished in the 1920s and 1930s.

The existing literature also rests on the assumption that censorship was designed and operated “nation-wide,” consistently, and in a uniform way. Hence it overlooks unforeseen consequences brought by different political conditions. This centralistic image of state and censorship echoes Napoleon Bonaparte’s vision in the early nineteenth century, which aimed at the establishment of a centralized state with a nation-wide censorship. Napoleon took the matter of censorship seriously because he saw “publishing as a political weapon which was dangerous if it fell into the wrong hands.”¹⁴ The kind of control Napoleon envisioned was one marked by homogeneity of criteria and application, which had previous been proven challenging and never fully realized. The image of a strong colonial state in the existing literature of Indies censorship is also due to the fact that studies have been done largely by literary scholars, who mainly deal with the cultural and literary state project, assuming that it successfully created a kind of sociocultural hegemony in the Indies. Disproportionate focus on Dutch policymakers, which looked at the Indies as a horizontal whole, also leads to neglect of local dynamics, inconsistencies in implementation, and unpredictable effects of censorship. Unlike these existing studies, my dissertation demonstrates that, although enjoying political dominance, the Indies state failed to

¹⁴ Nicholas Harrison, *Circles of Censorship: Censorship and its Metaphors in French History, Literature, and Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 26.

establish a hegemonic power over the Malay print culture; the Bureau for Popular Literature, which was the symbol of the colonial press monitoring and cultural project, by the middle of the 1930s had been proven ineffective.

Recent development in censorship studies provides a theoretical base for this dissertation inquiry.¹⁵ Such studies demonstrate that censorship is rarely static, systematic, unilateral, stable, or always fruitful, but is often dynamic, circumstantial, and conducive to clashes of interest. It is marked by, in Richard Burt's terminology, "dispersal" and "displacement."¹⁶ The implementation of censorship is usually "dispersed among a variety of regulatory agents and practices," while censorship itself manifests itself in "more than one thing, occur[ring] at more than one place and at more than one time." One object of censorship can take a variety of forms; in Burt's study of the early modern English theater, "texts were displaced from one channel or medium to another (for example, from print to manuscript or performance to print)." Given this condition, censorship and its implementation needed to be dynamic, capable of adaptation in order to be circumstantially more effective. As Sue Curry Jansen puts it, "The question is not, 'is there censorship', but rather 'what kind?'."¹⁷ Burt's new conceptualization of censorship in particular, as *dispersal* and *displacement* as opposed to *removal* and *replacement* (which emphasizes the conventional view of repressive and unilateral censorship), fits well with my

¹⁵ Richard Burt, "Introduction: The 'New' Censorship," in Richard Burt (ed.), *The Administration of Aesthetics: Censorship, Political Criticism, and the Public Sphere* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. xi-xxix; Burt, "(Un)Censoring in Detail"; Robert Darnton, "Censorship, a Comparative View: France, 1789-East Germany, 1989," *Representations*, No. 49 (Winter 1995), pp. 40-60; Annabel M. Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Nigel Wheale, *Writing and Society: Literacy, Print, and Politics in Britain, 1590-1660* (London: Routledge, 1999).

¹⁶ By defining censorship as "dispersal and displacement," Burt provides a new understanding of censorship. Burt, "(Un)Censoring in Detail," p. 17.

¹⁷ Sue Curry Jansen, *Censorship: The Knot That Binds Power and Knowledge* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 25.

discussion of the implementation of censorship in colonial Indonesia and its unforeseen consequences.

With regard to printed materials, there are generally two types of censorship – before and after publication. Pre-publication censorship involves a work being submitted for official scrutiny prior to publication, which can result in its suffering deletions, additions, or other alterations. Post-publication censorship comprises all other measures aimed at preventing already published materials from being distributed. This form of censorship did not try to alter the content, but focused on potential audiences and future deterrence. Censorship procedures include sanctions against the producers – that is authors, editors, publishers, and printers – of the problematic materials. Possible measures range from the exertion of psychological pressure, through professional restriction, fines and prison terms, to forced exile and even execution.

It is undeniable that censorship played a major role in the process of state formation and nation-building. In this respect, Michael Mann's concept of power is suggestive, which makes a distinction between despotic and infrastructural power.¹⁸ Despotic power refers to the repressive capacities of a state, while infrastructural power refers to its ability to penetrate the society and actually implement its decisions. Despotic power implies the autonomy of the state from social pressures, and it can be thought of as negative power. By contrast, infrastructural power is the ability of a state to get things done, to effectively exercise its authority and achieve its goals within the society, and hence can be described as a positive power. While despotic power is power over society, infrastructural power is power through society.¹⁹

¹⁸ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 54-75; Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results," in John A. Hall (ed.), *States in History* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 109-136.

¹⁹ For a recent discussion on and/or revival of infrastructural power, see Hillel Soifer, "State Infrastructural Power: Approaches to Conceptualization and Measurement," *Comparative International*

Borrowing Mann's concept of power, the goal for most colonial states can be said to combine despotic and infrastructural power. The state needed to be insulated from challenges originating from the (colonized) people, while exercising widespread control over its residents' activities. It is in these aspects that censorship played a crucial role to preserve the strength of the colonial state.²⁰

Censorship was a newly installed institution in the nineteenth century colonial Southeast Asia and hardly unique to the Indies. It was introduced when Western powers started to build modern states in Southeast Asia since the beginning of that century. In twentieth century colonial Southeast Asia, censorship functioned as a common tool to control media and political discourse. Censor administered surveillance over print matter concerning nationalist politics and radical movements, and suppressed them whenever necessary. In a colonial setting, censorship oscillated between a liberal ideology and conservative/repressive one, usually depending on the political mood in the metropolises and political developments in the colony.²¹ As in Mann's concept of power, censorship consists of both action and reaction of the state.

Development, No. 43 (2008), pp. 231-251; Dan Slater, "Iron Cage in an Iron Fist: Authoritarian Institutions and the Personalization of Power in Malaysia," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (October 2003), pp. 81-101; Dan Slater, "Altering Authoritarianism: Institutional Complexity and Autocratic Agency in Indonesia," in James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen (eds.), *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 132-167.

²⁰ J. M. Coetzee, *Giving Offence: Essays on Censorship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Charles A. Ruud, *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); Frederik Ohles, *Germany's Rude Awakening: Censorship in the Land of the Brothers Grimm* (Kent, London: The Kent State University Press, 1992); Dominic Boyer, "Censorship as a Vocation: The Institutions, Practices, and Cultural Logic of Media Control in the German Democratic Republic," *Comparative Studies of Society and History*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (2003), pp. 511-545; Katy Heady, *Literature and Censorship in Restoration Germany: Repression and Rhetoric* (Rochester: Camden House, 2009).

²¹ The nineteenth century Europe experienced various kinds of censorship. Liberalism that dominated in the century appeared not to conflict the exercise of censorship at the individual state level. For censorship in the nineteenth century Europe, see Robert Justin Goldstein, *Political Censorship of the Arts and the Press in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989); Robert Justin Goldstein (ed.), *The War for the Public Mind: Political Censorship in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Westport and London: Praeger, 2000); Alan S. Kahan, *Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe: The Political Culture of Limited Suffrage* (Houndmills, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

Action phase is the promotion of freedom of expression and constructive (creative) censorship; while the reaction phase tends to be repressive. By constructive censorship, I am referring to censorship that is designed to educate the society to understand the intention of the state. This includes control over the content and quality of literature. This type of censorship was often used in white settler's colonies such as Australia.²² On the one hand, the dominant liberal ideology in Europe in the late nineteenth century leaned toward introducing freedom of press and expression in the colony.²³ This idea came to colonies from the metropolises where citizens enjoyed more and more freedom of expression, and therefore were committed to granting the same privilege to the colonies. As my dissertation will show, by granting the colonized people freedom of expression, the colonizers supposed that they could "listen" to the indigenous people's voice and better understand their way of thinking. On the other hand, repressive censorship often reflected political developments in the colony. It was generally a reaction against radical political activism in urban areas, or unexpected rebellion in rural areas. There was however no universally standard measure of how to impose censorship in colonies. Local political conditions and security threats in the end determined the format of censorship. Local political and economic structures also induced different types of censorship. It is therefore understandable that each colony had its own style of censorship.²⁴

²² A typical example can be seen literary control in colonial Australia. British even published colonial edition of literature that originally published in Britain. Graeme Johanson, *A Study of Colonial Editions in Australia: 1843-1972* (Wellington: Elibank Press, 2000); Martyn Lyons and John Arnold (eds.), *A History of the Book in Australia, 1891-1945: A National Culture in a Colonial Market* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001); Deana Lee Heath, "Creating the Moral Colonial Subject: Censorship in India and Australia, 1880 to 1939," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2003); Juan R. I. Cole, "Colonialism and Censorship," in Roger D. Long (ed.), *The Man of the Spot: Essays on British Empire History* (Westport, London: Greenwood Press, 1995), pp. 45-62.

²³ Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Chapter 2 of this dissertation shall describe this point in the context of the Indies.

²⁴ Internal and external political conditions contributed to the creation of complex and diverse colonial realities and censorship. As studies on censorship in colonial Southeast Asia demonstrate, each colonial

In the early twentieth century Indies, where post-publication censorship was newly installed, on the surface it appeared to work properly. But in reality, it often malfunctioned and even paved the way for new markets for popular literature. The infrastructural administration of censorship was not well coordinated. In ordinary times bureaucrats often competed with one another for authority and influence, while in times of crisis they functioned rather blindly in repressive ways. Generally speaking, due to the nature of post-publication censorship, the authorities could not prevent journalists from writing articles or publishers from publishing materials that were considered transgressive. Under the mechanism of post-publication censorship, the politically committed writers and journalists were able to enjoy, in a limited way, a certain degree of freedom of expression. Hence print culture could serve as medium for popular discourse and attract the political-minded audience.

state had different censorship policy that reflected characteristics of individual colonial situation, and hardly established a central and uniform censorship. Comparatively, Dutch censorship was much more lenient compared to other colonies in Southeast Asia.

For instance, British Malaya exercised two types of censorship. Its governing policy – divide and rule – applied to two major ethnic groups, that is, Malays and Chinese. They exercised two different censorship policies to these two groups. For the Malay, constructive censorship was employed, while the Chinese faced repressive policy. This is because the Malay was politically moderate and became almost apolitical because local Malay authorities were guaranteed, whereas the Chinese were involved in political activism connecting with the Kuomintang movement. Anthony Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and the Expansion of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 247. On the exercise of power by Sultans in censorship and other areas, see also Tan Sri Datuk Dr Mohamad Said, *Memories of a Menteri Besar: Early Days* (Singapore: Heinemann, 1982), pp. 86, 161-162, 186; William Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1967), p. 230. For the information on British Malaya's censorship on the Chinese, C. F. Yong & R. B. McKenna, *The Kuomintang Movement in British Malaya 1912-1949* (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 1990), pp. 44-82.

In the case of Vietnam – the heart of French Indochina –, print was faced with less state control than that in British Malaya, and religious sphere enjoyed popularity through print. Shawn Frederick McHale, *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).

In the late nineteenth century, the Spanish-Philippines saw the rise of nationalism, which was the first tide of such movement in colonial Southeast Asia. For the analysis of two great Filipino writers and their works – José Rizal and Isabelo de los Reyes who lived in the world of censorship, see Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London: Verso, 2005).

In the Indies, censorship was executed irregularly and unpredictably, even as it functioned perfunctorily. Most frequently, it was employed to harass journalists; thus bureaucratic harassment and prosecution of journalists were normal practices of censorship in the Indies. On the other hand, expressing grievances (of the colonized people) and challenging abuses of official power were normal practices of journalism. Censorship was supposed to teach journalists the boundaries of freedom of expression by penalizing those who trespassed the laws that were designed essentially to maintain the colonial order. Prosecutors held the power to gather and use any evidence to harass and punish journalists, whenever the timing was appropriate. As my case studies show, charges were sometimes filed months after the targeted articles were published. The aforementioned Effendi case also reveals that insecurity constituted a major motivation for the officials to conduct censorship.

Central Questions

This dissertation attempts to shed light on how colonial anxiety paved the way for the introduction of specific types of censorship; how two major types of press censorship – *persdelict* and *perbreidel* – operated; and ultimately how print culture in the Indies was shaped by them. My research reveals that Indies censorship functioned depending on internal and external political conditions. It demonstrates in particular how domestic security threats and international structural change affected censorship, and how writers and journalists adapted to, even took advantage of, it. Changes in censorship essentially moved in one direction, which was a tighter one, and yet they simultaneously opened up new possibilities for print power to gain more popular support.

In general, censorship concentrated on the mass media to maintain its social influence.²⁵ It could work properly if the infrastructural power of the state functioned as designed. But the infrastructural power relies on the stability of the institutional complexity. The institutional complexity determines the degree of effectiveness and defectiveness of censorship. The problem is that institutional complexity does not guarantee the strength of the state, rather sometimes causes the weakness of the state. Hence the effectiveness of censorship requires constant reexamination even under a strong state. My research reveals that the complexity of the structure of censorial institutions conflicted with the simplistic image of the Indies state. The image of the colonial state was generally repressive, and it has contributed to the myth of strong and authoritarian state. Indeed, the Indies state had a notorious reputation for strict control and censorship over the society. In the 1930s the Dutch were firmly in control of the Indies and determined to maintain it. But the censorial institutions were not well coordinated, as they had three levels of management. The first level decided major colonial policies, and comprised the Minister of Colonies, the Minister of Justice, the Governor-General, and the (Indies) Prosecutor General. Their communications and understanding of the circumstances of print culture in the Indies determined the ideology and the extent of censorship. The second level was institutions of censorship execution; it consisted of the state publishing house or Bureau for Popular Literature, the Office for Native and Arab Affairs, the Bureau for Chinese Affairs, and the Political Information Service, which collected and analyzed printed materials. The third level comprised of a wide spectrum of local territorial institutions like Residents, Assistant Residents, police, and courts; this is the sphere where the censor and the censored interacted in actual contexts. Such institutional

²⁵ Thomas J. Cragin, "The Failings of Popular News Censorship in Nineteenth-Century France," *Book History*, No. 4 (2001), pp. 49-80.

complexity reveals the relatively autonomous position that the lowest level of authorities enjoyed. They deserve examination because not only they were the manifestation of censorship and state power, but also they “[could] empower challengers as well as incumbents”²⁶ depending on political circumstances. Additionally, however well designed and institutionalized, censorship does not always work as it is planned. In the case of the Indies, rules were often ambiguous in their meaning and effect, and hence the censoring authority and journalists frequently clashed, which created a sense of insecurity for the authorities in general. Looking at how rules were applied and how journalists and writers reacted sheds a new light on the old rigid image of censorship.

Censorship can be a double-edged sword. It constituted a part of the colonial policies once colonialism entered the period of state building and its management (which essentially was to define its territory and guarantee Westerners’ economic activities). It regulated, constructed, and promoted print culture among the educated locals. The regulating and constructing of print culture in return provided the journalists and writers with a space where they could express themselves. This shows the ambivalent nature of censorship. Centralized education and bureaucracy as well as “nationally” circulated newspapers not only provided new forms of integration where the metropole and the colony functioned together in a circulating space, but they sometimes veered from the “right route” and instead induced the rise and spread of indigenous nationalism,²⁷ which could turn radical and hence posing a threat to the colonial authority. Censorship could produce both positive and negative consequences to the colonial authorities. My research is motivated by the assumption that

²⁶ Slater, “Altering Authoritarianism,” p. 140.

²⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983).

examination of the interactions between censorship and popular print can shed light on how popular discourse developed and spread.

The Indies state administered pre-publication censorship for nearly half a century before switching to a post-publication type in the twentieth century. In this sense, Indies censorship closely followed and was intertwined with the development of nationalistic politics, in which the Malay language press played a driving force. Newspapers, periodicals, and popular literature in the Malay language flourished in the first few decades of the twentieth century. They set the arena for contested ideas and formed the necessary public sphere for an emerging nation. They were not, however, necessarily nationalistic projects; the colonial authorities and private agencies were heavily involved in the Malay print culture. In fact, the colonial state founded the Bureau for Popular Literature or *Balai Poestaka* (*Volkslectuur* in Dutch) initially to be an institution that set the standards of language and literature as part of its colonizing project. But Dutch-educated intellectuals competed with Islam-educated intellectuals to develop the “national” language and literature according to their respective visions, while Chinese-Malay publications simply overwhelmed the Indies print market. In the meantime, commercial-oriented entertainment media with distinct tastes and programs continued to circulate, irrespective of political programs. Thus, under the colonial censorship, the vernacular media helped stimulate and facilitate the Indies’ search for identities, without neglecting its fundamental purpose to entertain an audience in an ever-changing colonial society. In fact, as this dissertation shall demonstrate, thanks to censorship, the vernacular publishing market in the Indies flourished as popular literature conflated with political theater.

In the twentieth century Indies, censorship facilitated print culture, especially the Malay language print. Against the prevailing view that censorship restricts print growth, the rise of Malay print culture was actually shaped by censorship. This print

culture was primarily the exchange of commodities through publishing businesses, for which the logic of capitalism ineluctably operated.²⁸ Publishers tried to make money, and popular writers abided by market demands. On the other hand, when writing about politics was proscribed, popular literature began to peddle political fiction and turned a dissident fugitive into a fictional cult hero. Facts turned into fiction, fiction became politics; thus the Malay print power proved resilient. The Indies state could not simply control and affect the popular print market. Yet, print power was not free from economic circumstances that affected the publishing business. In the early 1930s when the Great Depression hit the colony, the Indies state started to pay close attention to the economic aspects of publishing business, such as advertisements and the financial situation of printing houses. Many private printers went bankrupt and some newspapers were forced to stop circulations. I argue therefore that exploring print culture as commodity helps underscore a different side of print power that is as sensitive to economic as to legal-political circumstances.

In reality, under the so-called repressive censorship, Malay language publications overwhelmed the print market. Remarkably, the number of Malay periodicals doubled from 60 in 1918 to nearly 120 in 1929.²⁹ Almost simultaneously, the Malay book market also expanded rapidly. In both newspaper and book markets, private publishers played a significant role; among them, Indies Chinese businessmen were dominant. The political atmosphere of the time – among others the spread of communist ideas, Chinese nationalism, women's emancipation, and discourse of political self-determination – also contributed to the growth of the Malay print market. In the 1910s and 1920s, Indonesian political activism developed and the political press

²⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 9-36.

²⁹ The data is calculated from *Overzicht van de Inlandsche Pers* (Survey of Native Press), various issues from 1918 to 1929. For the history of vernacular press from the middle of the nineteenth century until 1913 in the Indies, Ahmad B. Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness (1855-1913)* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1995).

followed. These two decades have been described as “an age in motion,”³⁰ when mobilized and organizational politics flourished, especially in Java. Organs of various Indonesian organizations provided forum for expressing and exchanging ideas and opinions. Three dominant ideologies – nationalism, Islamism, and Marxism – set the platform for the new society. In 1926 an article entitled “Nationalism, Islamism and Marxism” was published, crystallizing the political and ideological *zeitgeist* of the time. The article was written by then Indonesia’s most popular nationalist, Soekarno, and he had no problem explicating his position in relation to the three ideologies.³¹ Unlike contemporary understanding, Indonesian intellectuals often blended and cited those ideologies interchangeably, not always as conflicting ideas. From the point of view of the colonial state however, each ideology contained different orientations and induced different political activism and discourses, which needed to be monitored in distinct ways. By the late 1910s censorship had penetrated every single corner of intellectual activities, albeit in different degrees and with different effects. Hence it was the colonial censorship project as well as process that shaped the print culture in the Indies.

Analyzing the colonial state’s views and policies has often led to disproportionate reliance on Dutch reports and sources. Those sources are indeed valuable for historical reconstruction, but Dutch perspective and interests had various kinds of limitations, which inevitably pass on distorted views. The Indies state successfully contained radical communist activism, but in fact this was limited mainly to Java. It rather overlooked the development of political activism and anti-colonialism in which Islam played a significant role in Sumatra in the 1930s.

³⁰ Takashi Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912-1926* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990).

³¹ Sukarno, *Nationalism, Islamism and Marxism* (translated by Ruth T. McVey) (Ithaca: Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University, 1970).

Historian Audrey Kahin contends that because the Dutch were concerned mainly about Java, colonial reports inevitably stress “the limited and elite nature of the nationalist movement, and naturally downplay both its indigenous features and broad appeal.”³² They not only neglect the outer islands, but also lack a comparative perspective and analytical framework. How should one overcome this partiality? One approach is to examine local, private, and popular elements in print culture. Even with a small capital, publishing business was possible, as market demands supported it. Various local print cultures developed with local, ethnic, and class bases, and to analyze them requires a comparative perspective. Shifting from elite-centric texts to popular writings, from Java-centric focus to other regions, as well as from “indigenous”-centric analysis to inter-ethnic rivalry will be a promising style of comparative analysis. For my analysis of print power, I choose two types of popular literature: one produced by Indies Chinese in Java and the other by Medan-based intellectual circles in northeast Sumatra. The former literature, including its periodicals, was popular not only among the Chinese population but also among readers of other racial groups due to its colloquial Malay language style and popular topics. The latter type is the so-called “Medan literature,” which grew out of the Minangkabau ethnic group and (modernist) Islam networks in the late 1930s. A comparative perspective in return enriches our view of print culture and power in colonial Indonesia.

³² Audrey Kahin, *Rebellion to Integration: West Sumatra and the Indonesian Polity 1926-1998* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), p. 92. Shiraishi's *An Age in Motion*, although it concentrates on political activism in Java, also makes a similar critique on historiography in Indonesian studies.

Plan of the Dissertation

This dissertation attempts to highlight the instances where censorship was conceived, implemented, challenged, and forced to adapt. It is structured according to the chronological order of censorial regulations, while attempting to address a set of intertwined questions. My research reveals that censorship in fact facilitated the development of print, as much as print culture and power shaped censorship. The question is how and through what mechanisms this symbiotic relationship took shape. How were censorial regulations conceived and executed as a part of the maintenance of law and order in the Indies? What were the political conditions that defined Indies censorship? How did print culture shape censorship formation? How did censorship operate in the Indies? How did it interact with and affect the print culture? What kind of print culture was created? What kind of newspapers and popular literature emerged as a result? How did journalists and writers deal with or challenge censorship in order to perform their task as journalists? My research reveals that some political activist-journalists in fact took advantage of the media spotlight that came with charges of press offences. But what kind of writings or publications provoked the colonial authorities? How does one understand the interactions between writers and the authorities in the last decades of Dutch colonialism?

Chapter 2 describes the sociopolitical background of Indies censorship from the nineteenth century. It introduces the communications revolution that took place in the latter half of the nineteenth century Indies. It also illustrates how at the beginning of the Ethical Period in the 1900s the colonial government began to promote a “free press” and helped cultivate “indigenous” press by patronizing Javanese (and to a lesser extent Atjehnese) journalists. The first Indies censorship law was repressive in pre-publication fashion when only Dutch language newspapers were available in the colony. After the middle of the nineteenth century, a vernacular press emerged and

gained popularity among inter-racial audiences. The local born indigenized Europeans and Chinese – the so-called *indo* and *peranakan* – built this popular vernacular press. Liberal tendencies in the Netherlands introduced the Ethical Policy in 1901 to improve “native” welfare, led to the post-publication censorship law in 1906. The same liberal principles motivated Governor-General Joannes Benedictus van Heutsz to provide political and economic patronage to indigenous journalists, paving the way for indigenous-owned vernacular newspapers. But the patronage system came to an end when Van Heutsz was replaced in 1908. Meanwhile, overseas Chinese nationalism arrived in the Indies at the beginning of the twentieth century, setting in motion the national “awakening” of Indies people. The 1910s saw the formation of various indigenous and interracial political organizations. Those political associations had their own organs that caused anxiety among the colonial authorities, resulting in the introduction of the so-called “hatred-sowing” articles of the Penal Code in 1914. This new weapon of censorship was to be applied with particular zest to journalists.

Facing rapid sociopolitical changes, the Indies government considered and installed a new measure to monitor the burgeoning vernacular press. Chapter 3 of this dissertation examines the policy process and debate concerning press monitoring. Post-publication censorship of 1906 and the rise of nationalistic movement pushed the government to consider a surveillance system over the vernacular press. Thus the 1910s and 1920s became the age of press monitoring. Various kinds of press surveys were published; some were publicly consumed, while others circulated confidentially. The purpose of those press surveys was relatively the same, that is, to monitor vernacular press so that the government could obtain a clear picture of what was happening in the colony and what indigenous intellectuals were thinking. Press survey was also useful to identify potentially dangerous persons, movements, and places. However, no uniform and “nation-wide” press monitoring system was established.

Rather, it followed the colonial administrative arrangement, which distinguished indigenous from Chinese affairs. Since the main purpose of colonial administration laid in the maintenance of law and order in the society, major efforts were made to devise surveillance over indigenous groups and their publications. In this regard, the colonial Bureau for Popular Literature or Balai Poestaka was actively engaged in press monitoring as well as a cultural offensive.

Chapter 4 demonstrates how the “hatred-sowing” articles were applied to journalists and political activists, and how they reacted to such legal charges. The articles symbolized the repressive colonial attitude towards indigenous movements. Prosecutors collaborated with Balai Poestaka, which regularly conducted and published press surveys. But in the 1910s and the first half of the 1920s, indigenous journalists and activists took advantage of their “punishment” – specifically the trial process – and turned it into a political theater from where they could further expound their views. As a result of this repressive censorship, in the middle of the 1920s, entertainment and other types of apolitical publications flourished. Some indigenous journalists collaborated with the colonial government and tried to make profit using the latter’s patronage in publishing business. It was the time when the population of urban middle-class grew, and looked for entertainment.

Chapter 5 traces the policy shift concerning censorship. The colonial state experienced two major political blows. Since the late 1910s, it had launched a cultural project initiated by Balai Poestaka, which aim was to provide “proper” (apolitical) reading materials for the indigenous population and dominate the literature publishing market. In reality, however, it faced severe competition from the well-established Indies Chinese publishers and other types of “wild” (independent) publications. Its press monitoring was also severely challenged; because the number of vernacular press increased and Balai Poestaka failed to provide sufficiently comprehensive

information for the colonial bureaucrats. On the top of it, the press monitoring system failed to predict the communist uprisings in 1926 and 1927. Calls for the introduction of administrative measure to curb press excesses gained the majority voice, resulting in the Press Curbing Ordinance in 1931.

In the meantime, the unexpected communist uprisings of 1926-1927 forced the Indies state to build a political internment camp in Boven Digoel. Chapter 6 explores another form of censorship that works not so much by restricting than by managing, in this case by framing the way the press reported on Boven Digoel. The government controlled information on what was going on in the camp; all letters from Digoel were tightly censored, and only a handful of Western journalists were allowed to visit and write reports on Digoel. Yet news about the life of Digoel internees – with emphasis on its “normality” – were widely accessible to ordinary readers of Malay language newspapers. This peculiarity reveals how the government engaged in creative form of censorship by letting the public know about the prison camp as a form of deterrence, while upholding its image as the benefactor of the colonized people’s wellbeing. In other words, the censorship was as much about government propaganda about Digoel as it was about the restrictions to information, speech, and political activism that Digoel symbolized. For this chapter, I examine two vernacular newspapers – *Sin Jit Po* of Soerabaja and *Pewarta Deli* of Medan – to show how these newspapers carried accounts on Digoel. Intriguingly, most reports mentioned actual names, both detainees and their families, to make the stories sound “real.” A striking and understandable fact was that, although some internees collaborated with the Dutch authorities, no politics were detected in newspaper accounts. Such hidden political messages projected a new reality in the period of post-communist uprising, and political activists were supposed to be able to recognize them.

Chapter 7 scrutinizes the content and implementations of the 1931 Press Curbing Ordinance, which was the first administrative measure to suppress “dangerous” publications. Up until then, violations of press regulations were a matter for the courts; but the new ordinance empowered government officials to discipline publishers, printers, and distributors without trial. Originally, this ordinance targeted radical nationalist and Islamist party organs. In combination with the press offence articles of the Penal Code, it was successful in containing politically “dangerous” newspapers and journalists. It symbolized the repressive policy that the Indies government took against the nationalist movement in the 1930s. Yet external political conditions altered the original target and purpose of the ordinance. After 1936, no Indonesian nationalist newspapers or journals were shut down; instead, many Chinese-Malay and Chinese language press became the victims of the ordinance, along with a number of Japanese-owned vernacular publication and Dutch newspapers. By this time, the government’s security concern had shifted from the Indonesian nationalist movement to Japan’s southward expansion, which triggered hostile reactions from ethnic Chinese in the Indies. This development indicated that the Indies had entered a new age of security in which international matters presented a new challenge for the colonial government and were intertwined with domestic ones.

Yet a security concern somehow remained from the original “communist” threat as Chapter 8 examines. It analyzes a type of popular literature known as *roman pitjisan* (dime novels), which originated in Medan on the northeast Coast of Sumatra. The rise of this literature outside Java – the center of Dutch colonialism – escaped the attention of censorship. It was partly because the city was not geopolitically important from the point of view of colonial management, and partly because it was a form of literature that had less to do with organized politics. Taking advantage of not being affiliated with any political party, Adi Negoro, a German educated indigenous

journalist, started a new literary project in 1931. His newspaper, *Pewartar Deli*, often featured stories on underground communist activities. But these articles could avoid becoming the target of the Press Curbing Ordinance, mainly because they used semi-governmental Dutch newspapers as their sources. Medan also witnessed the emergence of a variety of nationalistic-oriented popular literary and Islamic journals that similarly escaped censorship attention by concentrating on “permissible” topics such as culture, literature, religion, and education. These “local” publications were supported financially by ethnic Minangkabau and modernist Islamic networks, which enjoyed “nation-wide” agents.

Finally, Chapter 9 is in some way an extension of Chapter 7 in that it discusses how the Chinese press in the Indies came to present a new challenge for the colonial authorities in the wake of the onset of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. The Press Curbing Ordinance, which was initially designed to maintain internal public order, was forced to change its nature (and target) in order to ward off external security threat, in this case potential aggression by Japan. The Indies government had a difficult time dealing with the external threat, because like other colonial authorities it was designed to govern the colonial territory. The Chinese population in the Indies began to become politically active ever since Japan started to invade China’s Manchuria in 1931. After the Sino-Japanese war broke out in 1937, aggressive anti-Japan(ese) propaganda proliferated in Chinese-Malay and Chinese newspapers despite frequent warnings and penalties. Because of this, both the Chinese-Malay and Chinese language press became the main target of suspension in the latter half of the 1930s. The colonial government was concerned that provocations by its Chinese residents would be used by Japan as an excuse to interfere in Indies domestic affairs. For this chapter, my dissertation spotlights a prominent Indies Chinese journalist,

Liem Koen Hian, who was among the most outspoken on the Japanese issue and as such became the most frequent target of censorship.

Ultimately, this dissertation demonstrates how censorship facilitated print culture and print power that might undermine the state power. Analyzing social and political functions of censorship in the Indies reveals both the strength and vulnerability of the Indies state, because censorship was essentially a matter of security and order. Although the colonial state retained the power to alter and eliminate political activities, it could not always regulate and control public discourse that appeared in the vernacular press and popular publications, thus became public consumption.

CHAPTER 2

“FREE PRESS” AND THE COLONIAL CONTEXT

The newspaper, a Western product, brings like a magic wand that lifts dead prose to a new life. The effervescence of everyday life: news demands expression, first in the longwinded style of narrative of the old prose of the hikayat, later short and powerful, sharp and clear, “to the point”: the new style, the new prose is born. Swept along by real life it sets off on the alleys of trashy literature.

– Armijn Pané³³

The Indies colonial state, as historian Onghokham put it, was “the first state in Asia with a modern bureaucracy and administrative structure, modeled after the new state after the French Revolution.”³⁴ In that regard, the role of the newspaper can hardly be overstated. The modern style newspaper was first introduced in the Dutch colony in the form of an official newspaper.³⁵ The Governor-General, Herman Willem Daendels (1808-1811), explained its purpose thus:

³³ Armijn Pané, *Kort overzicht van de moderne Indonesische literatuur* (Djakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1949), p. 13.

De krant, een Westersch product, brengt, gelijk een tooverstaf, het doode proza tot nieuw leven. Het vluchtige leven van alledag: het bericht vraagt om uitdrukking, eerst in de langdradige verhaaltrant van het oude proza van de hikajat, later kort en krachtig, scherp en helder, “to the point”: de nieuwe stijl, het nieuwe proza is geboren. Meegesleurd door het werkelijke leven begeeft het zich op zijpaden van schund-literatuur.

³⁴ Onghokham, *The Thugs, the Curtain Thief, and the Sugar Land: Power, Politics, and Culture in Colonial Java* (Jakarta: Metafor Publishing, 2003), p. 161.

³⁵ The missionary press existed since the middle of the eighteenth century, but its circulation was quite limited. Ahmat B. Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness (1855-1913)* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1995), pp. 5-7. Newspapers in the Netherlands began to circulate widely in the middle of the seventeenth century.

Besides affording the residents the pleasure of being able to read all the news, the object of the paper [...] was to publish all the acts of the General Government so far as they were of general interest, as also the condition of the finances and the employment of the revenue, in order that each and everyone might be given the opportunity to study the affairs of the colony and acquaint himself with the great changes that had been made in the administration and be assured of the salutary intentions and results of the same.³⁶

This statement needs to be placed in a historical context. As the Napoleon-appointed administrator in Java, Daendels' mission was literally to establish "a modern bureaucracy and administrative structure." Thus on November 22, 1809, regulations of the government printery works were drawn up, which set the stage for the official newspaper. In the same year, Daendels established the Government Printing Press (*Landsdrukkerij*). On January 5, 1810, the first official weekly newspaper, *Bataviasche Koloniale Courant*, appeared in Batavia, the capital of the colony. But the paper circulated for only one and a half years because the English took over Java in August 1811.

A British liberal, Thomas Stamford Raffles headed the British interregnum.³⁷ He started its own official paper, *The Java Government Gazette*, with its first issue on February 29, 1812. In addition to government notifications, decrees, and regulations, the *Gazette* contained lengthy accounts of the war in Europe. Through it, Dutch

Maarten Schneider, *De Nederlandse Krant van "Nieuwstydinghe" tot Dagblad* (Amsterdam: P. N. Van Kampen & Zoon N. V., 1943).

³⁶ G. H. Von Faber, *A Short History of Journalism in the Dutch East Indies* (Sourabaya: G. Kolff & Co., 1930), p. 21.

³⁷ Raffles was knighted in 1817. Coincidentally, the same year he published his well-received *A History of Java* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1965).

readers in Java could follow the fall of Napoleon in April 1814, which brought hope that they would soon be released from British rule. When Britain handed Java back to the Netherlands in 1816, *Gazette* naturally ceased to exist. The new Dutch administration started *Bataviasche Courant* in August 1816 as its official paper.³⁸ The paper was renamed to *Javasche Courant* in 1828, and lasted until the end of the Dutch rule in 1942.

These official papers circulated in a small circle because limited resources for print prevented privately owned newspapers from being published. Printing presses were almost exclusively owned by the government, aside from the contribution of the missionaries. Skilled print-setters were scarce. The number of readers was also very low at first. In 1814, the number of non-military “Europeans” (mainly Eurasians in fact) on the islands of Java and Madoera was estimated to be about 2,000. By 1860, 46 years later, the number was only 43,000 men and 1,000 women, scattered over both Java and the number of the Outer Islands.³⁹

But in the middle of the 1820s these conditions started to change. Merchants demanded information about economic resources and merchandise in Java. Thus privately owned commercially oriented newspapers began to be printed and circulated. As the center of the Dutch rule, Batavia (West Java) saw the initial emergence of such newspapers in Indies history. The first among them was *Bataviaasche Advertentieblad* (Batavian Advertiser) that marked its first issue in 1825. Four years later in 1829, another commercial paper *Nederlandsch Indisch Handelsblad* (Netherlands Indies Commercial Paper) began circulation. The long-lived *De Java*

³⁸ Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, pp. 4-5.

³⁹ Evert van Imhoff and Gijs Beets, “Education at home: the age-specific pattern of migration between the Netherlands and the former Dutch East Indies around 1930,” *Demographic Research*, Volume 11, Article 12 (2004), p. 338. On the Dutch in the Indies from the sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Ulbe Bosma and Remco Raben, *Being “Dutch” in the Indies: A History of Creolisation and Empire, 1500-1920* (translated by Wendie Shaffer) (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), pp. 1-103. In the early nineteenth century, 43,000 was about the same size as a small provincial town in the Netherlands.

Bode (The Java Herald) started its publication in 1852.⁴⁰ Other major port cities followed. In Soerabaja (East Java), the weekly *Soerabaijasch Courant* (Soerabaja Paper) began in 1837. In 1853 *Oostpost* was also launched in Soerabaja, changing its name to *Het Soerabajaasch Handelsblad* in 1859. In Semarang (Central Java) the *Semarangsche Advertentieblad* (Semarang Advertiser) started publication in 1845, and in 1863 renamed itself *De Locomotief*.⁴¹

The Printing Press Regulation of 1856

While private commercially oriented newspapers emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century, no legal regulations with regard to the supervision of the press existed. Even without specific press-related laws, strict state control was easily exercised because the size of the press was relatively small. The publisher of the apolitical *Semarangsche Advertentieblad*, for instance, had to obtain the permission of the local law officer for each day's issue.⁴²

But one influential editor enjoyed some degree of social standing and was treated in a quite opposite way from the publisher of the *Semarangsche Advertentieblad*. W. R. Baron van Hoëvell, the liberal editor of *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Review for Netherlands Indies) of Batavia, revealed that "he was not required to submit to the censor the copy for his monthly magazine, which frequently contained articles on the political administration of the Dutch East Indies."⁴³ With his words, van Hoëvell of course indicated that the practice of censorship was in fact operating during this period in the Indies. His comment was

⁴⁰ It stopped its circulation in 1957.

⁴¹ For a general history of major Dutch newspapers in the Indies, C. W. Wormser, *Journalistiek op Java* (Deventer: Uitgeverij W. Van Hoeve, 1941).

⁴² Von Faber, *A Short History of Journalism in the Dutch East Indies*, p. 40. The following example, debate, and citation are drawn from this page.

⁴³ Von Faber, *A Short History of Journalism in the Dutch East Indies*, p. 40.

intentionally political because he was an advocate for the interests of the people of the Indies. Through his writings in the journal, he contended that the Dutch had to fulfill their moral obligations towards the Javanese. After working as editor for the journal for eight years, in 1848 he was elected to the parliament in the Netherlands. As a member of the Second Chamber, he promoted an “ethical” colonial policy. Education, Christianity, and progress, he maintained, needed to be brought to Java.⁴⁴ Van Hoëvell considered the press to be as a powerful weapon to fight abuses and wrongdoings.⁴⁵ In fact, in the 1840s his journal apparently had been continuously harassed “by the Secretariat General, which had the final power to determine what was printable and what was not.”⁴⁶ The rationale of this authoritarian exercise derived from a government resolution of 1844 that prohibited the publication of “internal” materials obtained from government sources.

Thus although in the legal sense censorship did not exist, in practice most private Dutch newspapers were subjected to the state, and particular contents were not allowed to be published. This unwritten practice of censorship eventually stirred a debate in the Netherlands on whether or not freedom of the press should be granted in the Indies. The well-known liberal statesman John Rudolf Thorbecke took the initiative and singlehandedly drafted the revision of the Constitution of the Netherlands in 1848. His main intention was to create public checks on the government’s performance, which had not been exercised before. For him, a royal monopoly was not acceptable, thus he demanded the introduction of freedom of the press in the Indies, which up until that point remained still largely a royal domain.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ C. Fasseur, *The Politics of Colonial Exploitation: Java, the Dutch, and the Cultivation System*, (R. E. Elson translated), (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1992), pp. 107-108.

⁴⁵ Fasseur, *The Politics of Colonial Exploitation*, p. 109.

⁴⁶ Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, p. 13.

⁴⁷ In 1849 Thorbecke became the Minister of Internal Affairs, which made him the *de facto* first Prime Minister of the Netherlands. His first cabinet lasted until 1853. His second cabinet was formed in 1862 and lasted until 1866. The end of the Cultivation System is his achievement at the end of the 1860s. In

Conservatives were opposed to this idea. Under the leadership of ex-Governor-General Jean Chrétien Baud (1833-1836), they attempted to limit such freedom, arguing that the indigenous people of the Indies were being “somewhat exploited” and their bleak living conditions could easily be exposed by irresponsible newspapers. In other words, freedom of the press should not be granted because it could be “employed as a weapon against the Government.”

After a series of parliamentary debates, the conservatives’ argument prevailed, producing the “Press Article in the Government Regulation of 1854.” The Article concerning the press reads:

The supervision of the press by the Government must be regulated by ordinance in agreement with the principle that the publication of ideas and sentiments by the press and the admission of printed matter from outside the Netherlands must not be submitted to any restriction except such as is needed to ensure public order.⁴⁸

The article later produced a form of preventive supervision, which was put into the “Regulation on Printed Matter in the Netherlands Indies” (*Reglement op de Drukwerken in Nederlandsch-Indië*), which was abbreviated as the Printing Press Regulation or *Drukpersreglement*. Thorbecke retaliated by calling the Printing Press Regulation of 1856 “a deed of darkness.”⁴⁹ Considering the fact that no indigenous press existed at the time, the newly installed regulation was clearly aimed at those European papers in the colony that had a mainly liberal character, such as the

1871 he led his third and last cabinet until he fell ill in December that year. E. H. Kossmann, *The Low Countries 1780-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), passim.

⁴⁸ Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, p. 14.

⁴⁹ Von Faber, *A Short History of Journalism in the Dutch East Indies*, p. 40.

Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië, which was led by van Hoëvell and often harassed by the authorities for its boldness and venom.⁵⁰

The Printing Press Regulation required newspaper publishers to register at the local office, pay a security deposit, and maintain friendly relationships with the local government.⁵¹ Publishers were held responsible for all items in their newspapers other than straight news reports. If the reported items were considered to insult, scorn, or print libels directed against the King, the royal family, the Governor-General, and any public official or public body, or to attack laws and legitimate regulations, or to undermine respect for the government, the publishers would be punished by fines of up to 500 guilders and imprisonment for up to three years. Lesser punishments were prescribed for publishing false reports that might engender contempt or hate between the various segments of the population. As a precautionary measure, publishers of newspapers and periodicals were required to submit a copy of each edition to the local government two hours before it was released to the public. With the concurrence of his Advisory Council, the Governor-General could suspend or close down the operation of any press.⁵²

However, although the Printing Press Regulation was repressive in nature, in reality, the colonial authorities faced a challenge in trying to implement it. The printer and publisher of *Soerabaja Courant* argued, “the obligation [to submit one copy to the

⁵⁰ Ant. J. Lievegoed, “De journalistiek in Indië, 50 jaren geleden en thans,” *De Indische Gids*, 51 (1929), p. 199.

⁵¹ Besides the Printing Press Regulation, a license and a security deposit were required for the business of the printer and publisher. Since the license could be withdrawn at any time, this rule was used as another way to harass the business. Von Faber, *A Short History of Journalism in the Dutch East Indies*, p. 41.

⁵² Ian Proudfoot, “Room to Manoeuvre in the Nineteenth-Century Indies Malay Press: The Story of a Javanese Lieutenant,” *Indonesia and the Malay World*, Vol. 35, No. 102 (July 2007), pp. 155-182. Technically, two hours inspection could only allow for the authorities to check major contents. This regulation however created and maintained a situation where the authorities and publishers met on the regular basis.

authorities prior to the publication] could not apply to daily newspapers.”⁵³ He refused to submit the first issue of his paper for the year of 1869 to the law office, and hence his prosecution followed. Surprisingly, the court decided that the article in question could not apply to newspapers and even periodicals, because they were regulated by a different article, one which required publishers to send copies of their publication to the chief local authority. The judgment was confirmed by the Supreme Court on June 4, 1869. All non-state printers and publishers of newspapers and periodicals welcomed the decision. In wake of the court decision, local authorities were forced to subscribe to all papers and periodicals within their jurisdiction in order to exercise proper supervision. Accordingly, from July 1869, all provincial heads who received free copies had immediately to pass on all newspapers and periodicals to the law officers.

As the Printing Press Regulation of 1856 obliged all printers and publishers to send a copy of newspapers and periodicals to the chief local authority, the local authority was given the task of exercising pre-publication censorship. It had the power to check the content, change it, and even suspend distribution of the issue. It also had power to withdraw the license of printers and publishers at any time. The regulation was meant to intimidate and curb the newly emerging press in the Indies. This repressive measure, however, did not stop newcomers from starting their own newspaper business.

The Birth of the Malay Press

The latter half of the 1850s saw the emergence of Malay language newspapers and periodicals in various major cities in Java. Between 1855 and 1860, three weekly

⁵³ The following account is taken from Von Faber, *A Short History of Journalism in the Dutch East Indies*, pp. 40-41.

newspapers and two periodicals were published, although most of them were short-lived. This trend started not in Batavia, as had been the case of the Dutch language press, but in Soerakarta, the capital city of a small Javanese sultanate in Central Java. On January 25, 1855, a Jogjakarta-born Eurasian, C. F. Winters, Sr. and his son Gustaaf Winters launched the first Javanese-language weekly, *Bromartani* (All-Round Proclaimer), issued by a private printery Hartevelt Brothers of Soerakarta. It used the most refined form of the Javanese language, *kromo inggil*, because its target audience was the educated Javanese circle, including members of the royal family, who learned and taught such language at schools in town. Winters' weekly had educational purposes. News items were drawn from "from different countries," including "articles about science or physics, focusing on such subjects as the weights of air, water, and matter."⁵⁴ Local events, advertisements, notices of auctions, and the timetables of ships were also carried in the journal.

The first Malay-language newspaper emerged in the port-city of Soerabaja, East Java. In January 1856, a publisher, E. Fuhri, founded *Kabar Bahasa Melaijoe* (Malay Language News). It was a commercially oriented newspaper and its readership was drawn from among Chinese merchants, and Arab and indigenous traders in the city.

Within two years, a Malay language press also appeared in Batavia. In April 1858, the bookshop proprietors in Batavia, Lange & Company, started *Soerat Chabar Betawi*. It was also commercially oriented, but included news of official appointments, promotions, and retirements of civil servants, and local events in Batavia and other parts of Java.

In the main trading port-city of Central Java, Semarang, the weekly *Selompret Melaijoe* (Malay Trumpet) made its appearance in February 1860. The publisher was

⁵⁴ Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, p. 19.

G. C. T. van Dorp & Co., which also published the Dutch-language *Semarangsch Courant*. *Selomporet Melaijoe* quickly gained support from the European and Chinese mercantile communities in the form of advertisements.

From the 1860s on, various cities in the Indies saw the birth of journalistic publications in vernacular languages, mostly in Malay. *Bintang Timor* (Eastern Star) appeared in Soerabaja in 1862, *Pertela Soedagaran* (Mercantile Report) in Soerabaja in 1863, *Bientang Timoer* in Padang (West Sumatra) in 1865, *Biang-Lala* (Rainbow) in Batavia in 1867, *Tjahaja Siang* (Daylight) in Tondano (North Celebes) in 1868, *Mataharie* (Sun) in Batavia in 1868, *Bintang Bara* (Evening Star) in Batavia in 1870, and so on.

Europeans and Eurasians dominated the publishing business until the middle of the 1880s. It was not until 1885 that the so-called *peranakan* Chinese started to compete in the publishing business. *Peranakan* Chinese were local-born mix-blood Chinese, who were generally Malay or Javanese-speaking.⁵⁵ When the Gebroeders Gimbers & Company, which published the Malay newspaper *Bintang Timoer* (Eastern Star), went bankrupt, the business was publicly auctioned,⁵⁶ keeping its right to publish the missionary paper *Indische Opmerker*, and continued as *Bintang Timor*. The buyer was Tjoa Tjoan Lok, with the support of his relatives Tjoa Sien Hie and Tjoa Tjoan King. Later that year, in Buitenzorg, West Java, an educated *peranakan* Chinese, Lie Kim Hok purchased a printing press from the widow of the late D. J. van der Linden, who was a missionary and had edited *Bintang Djohar* (Star of Venus). Lie started to print *Pembrita Betawi* under the aegis of the Lie Kim Hok Press in September 1886. In 1886 in Semarang, a tri-weekly paper called *Tamboor Melayoe*

⁵⁵ *Peranakan* were generally distinguished from the so-called *totok* Chinese, who were more recent immigrants without local “blood,” and whose mother tongues were various Chinese dialects.

⁵⁶ The following account is drawn from Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, pp. 63-71.

(Malay Drum) appeared under the editorship of Sie Hian Ling. In 1888, Yap Goan Ho launched *Sinar Terang* (Bright Light) in Batavia, which was distributed also in Buitenzorg, Bandoeng, Tjiandjoer, Soekaboemi, Garoet, Tjirebon, Semarang, Demak, Soerabaja, Tegal, and Padang. In 1893, a publisher and owner of a printing press, Oeij Tjai Hin, began editing the daily *Bintang Barat* (Western Star) after the departure of Eurasian journalists J. Kieffer and E. F. Wiggers went on to found *Bintang Betawi* (Star of Batavia).

Around the same time, *peranakan* Chinese in the Outer Islands also started to engage in newspaper publishing. In 1894, Lie Bian Goan of Padang,⁵⁷ who was the agent of the Batavia-based *Sinar Terang* (Clear Light), launched his own paper *Pertja Barat* (Western Sumatra) together with Dja Endar Moeda, who later became the most influential journalist in Sumatra at the turn of the century. In Ambon, Ong Kie Hong began to edit a missionary periodical *Penghentar* (Introduction) in 1897, and the following year purchased the printing press that had printed *Selomporet Melajoe*. In 1899 in Menado, North Celebes, a Chinese by the name of K. D. Que, who had acquired the legal status of a European, set up the printing press enterprise Menadosche Drukkerij (Menado Printing-House).⁵⁸

Between 1855 and 1875, eighteen new vernacular newspapers and periodicals were launched; between 1875 and 1900 the number jumped to forty; and between 1900 and 1913 it reached one hundred twenty-three for the whole the Indies.⁵⁹ Many of these publications were short-lived, but some managed to last long and circulate widely. Notably, at the beginning, almost all publishing companies were run by either

⁵⁷ In the same year, Padang saw two other Malay newspapers, *Palita Ketjil* (Small Lantern) and *Sinar Menang-Kabau* (Light of Minangkabau).

⁵⁸ K. D. Que's previous surname was Kwee, which had the same pronunciation with a different spelling. See Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, pp. 69-71.

⁵⁹ The numbers are taken from Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, pp. 184-190.

Dutch or Dutch Eurasians, but Chinese with roots in the Indies soon followed. The growing number of vernacular newspapers and periodicals reflected the rapid social change in urban areas and growing market demands. Needless to say, the colonial authorities had to consider how to deal with this changing situation.

The Press Act in Practice

Despite the initial problems in the way the regulations could be interpreted and applied, the newly installed Printing Press Regulations of 1856 did manage to control vernacular newspapers tightly in the Indies. From the 1860s onward, local colonial authorities began to exercise control in the form of the Press Act, which was applied first to Dutch newspapers and then Malay language newspapers. In particular, since “the Dutch-language press predominantly took on an oppositional flavour, promoting liberal ideas in a crusading style,”⁶⁰ they became the major target of the Press Act.

According to Ian Proudfoot, the earliest cases of violation of the Press Act took place in Batavia and Soerabaja in the first half of the 1860s. In 1860 the editor of *Bataviaasch Handelsblad* was prosecuted under this Act. The offending article entitled “Officials on unemployment relief” allegedly disgraced public officials and the Governor-General, and for this reason, he was imprisoned for eighteen months. A second case occurred in 1865 when an anonymous article in *De Nieuwsbode* (Messenger) of Soerabaja projected a miserable future for the colony. It was accused of stirring up “hatred and contempt for the colonial government” and of attempting to split the Indies from the Netherlands. The Governor-General invoked his “exorbitant rights,” which allowed him to forbid residency at the particular places in the Indies when he believed that public order and peace was threatened,⁶¹ to exile “both the

⁶⁰ Proudfoot, “Room to Manoeuvre in the Nineteenth-Century Indies Malay Press,” p. 156.

⁶¹ Kenji Tsuchiya, *Democracy and Leadership: The Rise of the Taman Siswa Movement in Indonesia* (translated by Peter Hawkes) (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), p. 23.

editor, Nosse, and the author, (later on exposed as) Roorda van Eysinga, from the Indies.”⁶²

The 1870s saw many editors of Dutch language newspapers being prosecuted for violation of the Press Act. Most of these cases took place in major cities in Java. Ahmad Adam explained that “[the] common accusation was [journalists] defaming someone through their newspapers.”⁶³ For instance, in 1871, Mr. Winckel, an editor of the *Semarangse Courant* was charged with libel and had to face the *Raad van Justitie* (Court of Appeal). He “was accused of libeling the Resident of Japara” and was found guilty. In 1873 the Netherlands declared war on the Sultanate of Atjeh and intermittent fighting lasted until 1904 when most of the region came under firm colonial control. In 1873 Winckel was charged again for his writing in the same newspaper. This time he criticized the government’s policy towards Atjeh, saying that the Governor-General James Loudon “was not prepared for his great task in handling the Atjeh question.” Due to this article, Winckel was deported to the Netherlands.⁶⁴

In 1879 the editor of Semarang’s *De Locomotief*, J. W. Cohen Stuart, was arrested and imprisoned for a period of six months. The charge was that he wrote a seditious article that was critical of the Governor-General. In 1881 another editor of *De Locomotief*, J. W. H. Halkema of Jogjakarta was reportedly banished from the Indies due to an article that libeled the local Sultan. In 1882, the editor of *Bataviaasch Handelsblad*, J. A. Haakman, received a warning, saying that “the government would not hesitate to deport him from the Indies.”⁶⁵

Lesser charges under the Press Act were found in the cases of H. B. van Daalen and L. N. H. A. Chatelin. As the editor of *Java Bode* of Batavia, van Daalen

⁶² Proudfoot, “Room to Manoeuvre in the Nineteenth-Century Indies Malay Press,” p. 156.

⁶³ Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, p. 51, fn 72.

⁶⁴ Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, p. 51, fn 72.

⁶⁵ Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, p. 53.

was imprisoned for a year in 1874 due to “his criticism of the government’s conduct of the Atjeh issue.” In 1876 Chatelin, who was the editor of the *Sumatra Courant* of Padang, “was sentenced to four month’s jail for” violation of the Press Act. Both men, it appears, were often charged with violations of the Press Act: in 1879 van Daalen was fined f 20 and imprisoned for two months, while Chatelin was fined f 1,000 in 1873 “for reprinting a circular of the General-Secretary dated November 4, 1866 in his paper.”⁶⁶

Starting in the 1870s, Dutch, *Indo* (Eurasian), and indigenous editors of Malay language newspapers also became the targets of the Press Act, although the rulings against them were minor compared to those of the Dutch language newspapers.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, editors were being fined or imprisoned for a short period: the editor of *Wazir Hindia* (Indies Commissioner) of Batavia, Abdul Chatab, in 1878; the editor of *Bentara Melajoe* (Malay Herald) of Padang, Arnold Snackey, in 1882; the editor of *Bintang Timoer* (Eastern Star) of Soerabaja, A. Bois d’Enghien, in 1883; the editor of *Selomporet Melajoe* (Malay Trumpet) of Semarang and former Assistant Resident, G. R. Lucardie, in 1883; the editor of *Batara-Indra* of Soerabaja, A. M. Voorneman, in 1885; the editor of *Bintang Timoer*, F. C. E. Bousquet, in 1887; the editor of *Pembrita-Bahroe* (New Herald) of Soerabaja, P. C. Halkema, in 1890; and the editor of *Palita Ketjil* (Small Lantern) of Padang, Datoe Soetan Maharadja, in 1893.⁶⁸

Some victims of the Press Act were forced to close their printing houses, permanently or temporarily. The first case of closure of a printing press came on July 3, 1879. On that day, the Governor-General issued a decree shutting down the press

⁶⁶ Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, p. 51, fn 72.

⁶⁷ Proudfoot argues that the reason why early Malay newspapers were less frequently charged with violation of the Press Act was that they were not only immature in their contents, but also sensitive in publishing articles, although sometimes they translated articles from Dutch newspapers into Malay. See Proudfoot, “Room to Manoeuvre in the Nineteenth-Century Indies Malay Press.”

⁶⁸ Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, p. 52.

of Jonas Portier & Co in Soerakarta, and its paper *De Vorstenlanden* (The Principalities) was banned. The government reportedly had been irritated by the criticisms that *De Vorstenlanden* made, and its editors had not stopped writing critical comments. The 1880s saw several similar cases. In 1882 H. M. van Dorp & Co. of Batavia was ordered to suspend the printing of *Java Bode*, which also affected the publication of *Hindia-Nederland*. In 1885 G. C. T. van Dorp of Semarang faced the same fate, which affected the circulations of *Indische Vaderland* (Indies Fatherland) and *Selompret Melajoe*.

The local authorities in Batavia, Semarang, Soerabaja, Soerakarta, and Padang often exercised the Press Act against mainly Dutch journalists. Those cities were major commercial centers in the Indies and attracted many merchants and newcomers from outside. The question is then why the 1870s and 1880s experienced many cases of Press Act prosecutions, especially with regard to the Dutch language newspapers. In order to answer this question, social and demographic changes need to be examined.

Social Changes

The severity of punishments meted out to Dutch-language newspapers reflected major social changes in Java that were taking place in the late nineteenth century. Among others, demographic change established a new social reality in the Indies. In the late nineteenth century, the majority of Europeans resided in major towns and cities in the Indies, especially on Java. In 1850 more than half of the Europeans were Eurasians or the so-called *Indos*, whose fathers were Europeans and mothers natives.⁶⁹ But after the opening of the Suez Canal in November 1869, a

⁶⁹ There was no such legal category as *Indos* or Eurasians in the Indies, unlike in the Spanish Philippines. The offspring of a Dutch father gained the legal status of a Dutch person if s/he was legally acknowledged by the father, or a “native” if s/he was not.

growing proportion of Europeans came from outside the Indies. In 1870, free entry into the Indies was allowed to Dutch people of all kinds, and the first ships that sailed through the Suez Canal reached the colony. First, wealthy and aristocratic Europeans arrived, followed by growing numbers of middle class Europeans from the middle of the 1880s onwards.⁷⁰

In 1870 reportedly half of the Europeans in Java lived in the three largest cities of Batavia, Semarang and Soerabaja. In 1855 there were 4,145 Europeans in Batavia of which 2,009 were *Indos* and other mixed-race, 1,026 Indies-born Europeans, and 840 newcomers (European-born Caucasian). Thus 80 percent of the Europeans in Batavia were born in the Indies. Fifteen years later, however, the demographic composition of Batavia had changed. In 1870 the percentage of Indies-born “Europeans” had declined to 63 percent. Other urban centers of the Dutch colony, however, did not follow this pattern; the Indies-born European population in Semarang and Soerabaja still had Indies-born European populations totaled 87 percent and 84 percent respectively.⁷¹

The newly arrived migrants brought European life styles into the Indies. They insisted on leading a secure and convenient urban life in the colony. Having been able to bring their families from Europe in the 1870s, they then demanded schools of acceptable European standards for their children. These demands necessitated the construction of social infrastructures fit for modern European-style urban life, changing the urban landscape, and in turn creating a compartmentalization of population groups. For instance, in 1862 Batavia had its first gas lamps for European residential areas, while in the Chinese quarters they only came in 1895. The same

⁷⁰ J. S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1944), p. 212.

⁷¹ The data are taken from Bosma and Raben, *Being “Dutch” in the Indies*, pp. 228-229.

went for the installations of piped water and paved roads.⁷² City gardens, public parks, theatrical performances and concerts became public spaces exclusively available for “Europeans.”

While many “Europeans” enjoyed an increasingly modern lifestyle, the number of paupers became more and more visible in urban areas since the 1850s.⁷³ A division between the well-to-do Europeans and poorer ones, usually Eurasian, gradually developed. The former established residencies in the newer districts of the cities, while the latter lived close to the Chinese and indigenous people in the unhealthy inner city. After the agricultural crisis of 1884, even plantation owners could not avoid an erosion in their socio-economic foundation.⁷⁴ Unemployment grew among Europeans, while increasingly *Indos* began to be treated as social pariah, which helped shape an *Indo* consciousness.⁷⁵

The cheap Dutch-language newspapers bore testimony to struggles against discrimination and resistance to an oppressive colonial bureaucracy. They articulated the grievances of the lower “European” (mainly *Indo*) classes, which often provoked the colonial authorities to contain their voices on charges of inciting hatred. The case of the West Sumatran newspaper *Padangsch Handelsblad* (Commercial Newspaper of Padang) in 1882 deserves attention. It was accused of violating the printing press regulations and eventually was forced to close down. The excuse the judge presented was the fact that the newspaper, edited by *sinjos* (derogatory word for mixed blood Eurasians), had expressed, now for fifteen years, open hostility towards the “newcomers” who were marginalizing them.⁷⁶

⁷² Bosma and Raben, *Being “Dutch” in the Indies*, p. 229.

⁷³ Bosma and Raben, *Being “Dutch” in the Indies*, p. 228.

⁷⁴ A Dutch journalist P. A. Daum wrote a novel published in 1890 in which he depicted the downfall of an aristocratic planter’s family; see Daum, *Ups and Downs of Life in the Indies* (translated by Elsje Qualms Sturtevant and Donald W. Sturtevant) (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987).

⁷⁵ Bosma and Raben, *Being “Dutch” in the Indies*, p. 268.

⁷⁶ Bosma and Raben, *Being “Dutch” in the Indies*, pp. 284-292.

Dutch-language newspapers also drew attention to white pauperism in urban areas,⁷⁷ which became a major topic among Dutch journalists. They criticized the government and accused it of doing nothing during the crisis of 1884. In 1885 J. F. Scheltema, the editor-in-chief of *De Locomotief* and his colleague Paul A. Daum of the *Indisch Vaderland* were forced to resign under the Press Act (*persdelict*) due to their critical comments on the alleged government unresponsiveness.⁷⁸

Another kind of social uneasiness arose from within the “European” community itself. The social behavior of Dutch women drew more media attention. Until the end of the nineteenth century it was considered normal for white women, especially in areas outside of the colony’s big cities, to wear indigenous dress in their daily life. Some white women became sexually involved with indigenous men, just as Dutch men lived with indigenous concubines or *njais* and sired mixed-blood children.⁷⁹ But newly arrived Europeans could not tolerate this kind of acculturation, and instead they tried to protect their private sphere and social status as “whites.”⁸⁰ Most of the newcomers lived in the colony’s cities, and were fearful of the crime and epidemics that they imagined as being rampant among the native population. Those who had to live in rural areas or small towns simply felt insecure living in a situation where they were surrounded by the indigenous people.⁸¹

⁷⁷ For the discussion of white pauperism or poor whites, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 36-38.

⁷⁸ Gerard Termorshuizen, *P. A. Daum: Journalist en Romancier van Tempo Doeloe* (Amsterdam: Nijgh & Van Ditmar, 1988), p. 282. Daum kept his position as chief editor of the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*. Bosma and Raben, *Being “Dutch” in the Indies*, p. 288.

⁷⁹ Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*.

⁸⁰ Until the late nineteenth century a kind of shared culture existed among the Europeans, the Chinese and the indigenous aristocrats in Java. See James Rush, *Opium to Java: Revenue Farming and Chinese Enterprise in Colonial Indonesia, 1860-1910* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University, 1990).

⁸¹ Onghokham, “The Inscrutable and the Paranoid: An Investigation into the Sources of the Brotodiningrat Affair,” in his *The Thugs, the Curtain Thief, and the Sugar Land*, pp. 3-73.

This insecure feeling among Europeans created a new attraction in the newspapers. Stories about *njais* and crimes, particularly in Malay language newspapers, became popular topic in the 1880s on. These new genres demanded new kinds of journalists who could penetrate into the grey zones of society, although up until the middle of the 1880s career journalists were almost exclusively Europeans not born in the Indies.⁸² Thus the *Indos* and the Indies Chinese found new career opportunities in journalism. In fact, their writings elicited positive reaction from a growing audience. Popular topics often became the focus of fictionalized accounts that were serialized in the newspapers and later compiled and published in book form. Indo writers such as F. Wiggers, G. Francis and H. Kommer and Chinese authors like Lie Kim Hok and Tan Ging Tiong were major and popular contributors of such tales.⁸³

Gradually, “daily papers had grown cheaper and people on low incomes would often share a subscription.”⁸⁴ Literacy rates also increased. This whole process can be

⁸² Bosma and Raben, *Being “Dutch” in the Indies*, p. 288.

⁸³ Popular stories from those days are compiled in Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Tempo Doeloe: Antologi Sastra Pra-Indonesia* (Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1982). These stories in Malay are considered the first modern Malay literature. See also James T. Siegel, *Fetish, Recognition, Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 54-93; Noriaki Oshikawa, “*Patjar Merah Indonesia* and Tan Malaka: A Popular Novel and a Revolutionary Legend,” in Takashi Shiraishi, (ed.), *Reading Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: Southsat Asia Program, Cornell University, 1990), pp. 9-39.

Hikajat Njai Dasima (Njai Dasima Story) originally written by Francis was one of the most popular and reproduced works. It is the story about a *njai* who leaves her lover, an Englishman, in order to marry a good-for-nothing who murders her. The Englishman leaves the Indies with Nancy, his daughter by Njai Dasima. Claudine Salmon, *Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia: A Provisional Annotated Bibliography* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 1981), p. 350. For a fine analysis of Njai Dasima, see Kenji Tsuchiya, “Popular Literature and Colonial Society in Late-Nineteenth-Century Java: Cerita Nyai Dasima,” *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (1991), pp. 17-30.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, an anti-concubine movement emerged in the Netherlands. Intriguingly, the movement originally intended to abolish white slavery in the Netherlands as well as Europe. Protecting family values was behind the movement. In this context, the Indies concubine became unacceptable to the Dutch, and instead white prostitution was legalized. Petra de Vries, “‘White Slaves’ in a Colonial Nation: The Dutch Campaign Against the Traffic in Women in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Social & Legal Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2005), pp. 39-60. For a study of prostitution policy in the Indies, see Andrew Jimenez Abalain, “Prostitution Policy and the Project of Modernity: A Comparative Study of Colonial Indonesia and the Philippines, 1850-1940,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 2003).

⁸⁴ Bosma and Raben, *Being “Dutch” in the Indies*, p. 299.

seen as the democratization of the press in the Indies.⁸⁵ Simultaneously journalism “joined in as watchdog over white morality.”⁸⁶ This newly constructed tradition of journalism as a moral as well as social force was passed onto the indigenous journalists in the early twentieth centuries.

Liberal Winds

In the Netherlands after the 1848 revolution liberalism became more and more popular. Dutch citizens in the metropole started to pay attention to the indigenous people in the Indies. In 1860, a few years after the authoritarian Printing Press Regulation was introduced, the publication of one novel changed the Dutch people’s perception of the colony and came to influence colonial policies in the long run. The novel was *Max Havelaar, of de koffij-veilingen der Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij* (Max Havelaar, or the Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company),⁸⁷ written by Eduard Douwes Dekker, who was born in Amsterdam in 1820, but at the age of 18 had gone to Java, where he obtained a post as civil servant. In 1851 he was promoted to Assistant Resident in Ambon, and then was transferred to Lebak in Bantam, Java, in 1857. Because of his position as a medium-ranking colonial official, Dekker came to see firsthand the abuses of the Dutch Cultivation System, and began to criticize it openly. Consequently he was threatened with dismissal, and because of this he resigned from his position and returned to the Netherlands. Upon his return he was determined to expose in detail the scandals and abuses that he had witnessed, and began to write about them in newspapers. In 1860 he published the novel *Max Havelaar* under the pseudonym Multatuli.

⁸⁵ Gerard Termorshuizen, *P. A. Daum: Journalist en Romancier van Tempo Doeloe* (Amsterdam: Nijgh & Van Ditmar, 1988), pp. 277-287.

⁸⁶ Bosma and Raben, *Being “Dutch” in the Indies*, p. 272.

⁸⁷ Multatuli, *Max Havelaar; or, The Coffee sales of the Netherlands Trading Company*, (translated by W. Siebenhaar), (New York, London: A.A. Knopf, 1927).

Max Havelaar became a sensation, domestically as well as internationally, and was translated into the top European languages.⁸⁸ It was sensational because it informed the Dutch people in the metropole of the harsh socio-economic conditions in Java and at the same time laid the blame on the Dutch colonial system as its cause. Arguably it pushed the Netherlands government to legislate colonial slave emancipation in 1863, thirty years after the British counterparts.⁸⁹

The main target of the novel was the Cultivation System, which was introduced in the Indies in 1830. In the novel, the protagonist Max Havelaar is a colonial official who is caught up in this corrupt government system despite his good intentions. *Max Havelaar* was a protest novel against the overall colonial system and was later credited as “the book that killed colonialism.”⁹⁰ It brought awareness among Europeans in Europe that the wealth they had enjoyed actually derived from immeasurable suffering in the colonies.

The liberals’ rationale was that removing barriers to economic progress would promote the general welfare in the Indies.⁹¹ The implicit goal was individual gain, and so they clamored for the state to develop a modern economic and communications infrastructure. After the 1850s, the telegram, railways, and modern mailing system were introduced, bringing about a revolution in social communication in the Indies.

In October 1856 the first electro-magnetic telegraph link was installed between Batavia and Buitenzorg. In the following year when the Batavia-Soerabaja link was opened and its Semarang and Ambarawa branches was established, telegraph services

⁸⁸ Benedict Anderson, “Max Havelaar (Multatuli, 1860),” in Franco Moretti (ed.), *The Novel Volume 2: Forms and Themes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 449-462. Anderson shows that originally the book was translated only into French, English and German. After Dekker passed away in 1887, translations in various European and other languages became available.

⁸⁹ An analysis of the reasons for Dutch “delay” in slave emancipation in its colonies, see Seymour Drescher, “The Long Goodbye: Dutch Capitalism and Antislavery in Comparative Perspective,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 99, No. 1 (1994), pp. 44-69.

⁹⁰ Pramodya Ananta Toer, “Best Story: The Book That Killed Colonialism,” *The New York Times*, (April 18, 1999).

⁹¹ Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, p. 222.

were opened to the public.⁹² As the following table shows, the telegraph wire was installed beginning in 1856, two years before it became active. The wire is the long continuous cable connecting points in the telegraph system, while the telegraph line is the wire that carries telegraph signals. In 1859 when the telegraph line was activated, its network extended for 2,750 kilometers.⁹³

Table 2-1: Development of Telegraph Network, 1856-1906		
Year	Wires (km)	Lines (km)
1856	0	0
1858	2,650	0
1859	2,750	2,750
1871	4,750	4,750
1886	7,600	5,750
1888	9,750	7,500
1889	10,023	7,751
1890	10,045	7,773
1891	10,043	7,761
1906	18,928.32	13,912.23
[Source: Taken from <i>Verslag omtrent den Post- en Telegraafdienst in Nederlandsch-Indië</i> (Batavia: Ogilvie & Co, 1891, 1892, 1893); <i>Verslag omstrent den Post- en Telegraafdienst in Nederlandsch-Indië</i> (Wetevreden: Javasche Boekhandel & Drukkerij, 1907); <i>Verslag omstrent den Post- en Telegraafdienst in Nederlandsch-Indië</i> (Batavia-Wetevreden: G. Kolff & Co., 1916). Data between 1856 and 1886 are my estimation.]		

In 1870 submarine cables began to be established within the archipelago. The colonial regime took advantage of the vast under-sea cable system built by the British and Americans, by hooking into the nearby hub of Singapore. The following table shows the speed and character of the process.⁹⁴ Because of the aggressive expansion

⁹² Direktorat Jenderal Pos dan Telekomunikasi, *Sejarah pos dan telekomunikasi di Indonesia: Jilid I Masa pra Republik* (Jakarta: Departemen Perhubungan, Direktorat Jenderal Pos dan Telekomunikasi, 1980), pp. 89-96.

⁹³ *Verslag omtrent den Post- en Telegraafdienst in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batavia: Ogilvie & Co, 1891).

⁹⁴ Because of this aggressive expansion of telegraph networks, wires reached 10,023 kilometers in 1890 when telegraph lines had 7,773 kilometers. The telegraph network continued to expand, and in 1906 wires reached 18,928 kilometers, while lines 13,912 kilometers. Direktorat Jenderal Pos dan

of telegraph networks, telegraph lines reached 7,761 kilometers in 1891, and 13,912.23 kilometers in 1906. By 1914 telegraphic submarine cables had expanded throughout the Indies connecting to the hinterland.

Table 2-2: Expansion of Telegraphic Submarine Cable	
1870	Batavia (Java) – Singapore, Banjoewangi (Java) – Port Darwin (Australia)
1888	Gresik (Java) – Bangkalan (Madoera)
1892	Medan – Oelheu (Sumatra)
1897	Oelheu (Sumatra) – Sabang (Weh Island)
1897	Singaradja (Bali) – Ampenan (Lombok)
1901	Situbondo (Java) – Bandjarmasin (Borneo)
1903	Balikpapan (Borneo) – Kwandang and Manado (Celebes)
1904	Muntok (Billiton) – Pangkalpinang (Bangka) – Palembang (Sumatra)
1905	Makassar (Celebes) – Balikpapan (Borneo)
1907	Muara Pegatan (Borneo) – Kumang-Kumang (Laoet Island)
1909	Medan (Sumatra) – Sabang (Weh Island)
1910	Situbondo (Java) – Makassar (Celebes)
1912	Padang – Sibolga (Sumatra)
1913	Padang (Sumatra) – Batavia – Semarang and Soerabaja (Java)
1913	Soerabaja (Java) – Balikpapan (Borneo)
1913	Balikpapan (Borneo) – Manado (Celebes)
1914	Kema/Gorontalo (Celebes) – Ternate
[Source: Taken and modified from Direktorat Jenderal Pos dan Telekomunikasi, <i>Sejarah pos dan telekomunikasi di Indonesia: Jilid I Masa pra Republik</i> (Jakarta: Departemen Perhubungan, Direktorat Jenderal Pos dan Telekomunikasi, 1980), p. 98.	

The first steam train was introduced in 1868 in Semarang, Central Java. The train ran from Semarang Goedang (station) to Tanggoeng, and soon reached to Kedoengdjati, a total of 9 kilometers. As a port city connecting the hinterland as well as the spread of plantations in the northern coastal region of Central Java, Semarang became the center of the train system in Java. By 1885 railway network had expanded

Telekomunikasi, *Sejarah pos dan telekomunikasi di Indonesia: Jilid I Masa pra Republik* (Jakarta: Departemen Perhubungan, Direktorat Jenderal Pos dan Telekomunikasi, 1980), pp. 89-96.

to 553 kilometers in Java, while by 1900 it had reached 2607 kilometers in Java and Sumatra.⁹⁵

In turn, railways led to the expansion of postal system in the Indies. By the 1890s long distance mail delivery in Java mainly relied on trains. Major routes consisted of Batavia-Tandjong Priok-Weltevreden-Meester-Cornelis-Buitenzorg-Tjitjalengka-Garoet; Tegal-Balapoelang; Semarang-Kedoengdjati-Ambarawa-Soerakarta-Djokjakarta-Koetoardjo-Poerworedjo-Tjilatjap; Soerakarta-Modjokerto-Sidoardjo-Soerabaja; Kertosono-Kediri-Toeloengagoeng-Blitar; Sidoardjo-Pasoeroean-Probolinggo; and Bangil-Malang.⁹⁶

In 1876 when newspaper delivery started, it ultimately became the main item being distributed through the colony's the postal system. From the outset, the newspaper delivery already constituted 30 percent of all mail delivered, while by 1891 it reached more than half of all items (53.7 percent) in the mail category. In the cities Batavia, Semarang, Soerabaja and Jogjakarta, which were the centers of the publishing industry, newspapers circulated mainly through the mail system. In 1891 newspapers accounted for 82.1 percent of all mails delivered in Batavia, while in Semarang and Soerabaja this share reached 59.5 percent and 64 percent respectively in the same year. The expansion of the postal network and service certainly helped develop the newspaper business.

⁹⁵ See Appendix 1 "Expansion of Railways in the Nineteenth Century Indies." Railways changed cities' outlook; they eventually expanded the boundaries of cities and created new sections. See Claudine Salmon, "The Batavian Eastern Railway Co. and the Making of a New "Daerah" as Reflected in a Commemorative Syair Written by Tan Teng Kie (1890)," *Indonesia*, No. 45 (1988), pp. 49-62.

⁹⁶ *Verslag omtrent den Post- en Telegraafdienst in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batavia: Ogilvie & Co, 1893). In 1889, there were four major ways to deliver mails on the daily basis. Train and tram carried mails for a total of 4951 kilometers, while for relatively short distance and mountainous regions' deliveries were made by horse carriages for a total of 1995 kilometers and horses for 291 kilometers. *Verslag omtrent den Post- en Telegraafdienst in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batavia: Ogilvie & Co, 1891).

Table 2-3: Newspapers in Mail Delivery, 1876-1915			
year	total mails	newspapers	percentage
1876	2,250,000	675,000	30
1885	3,300,000	1,275,000	38
1886	3,300,000	1,500,000	45
1889	3,873,149	1,635,384	42.2
1890	3,905,811	1,827,034	46.7
1891	3,941,935	2,119,816	53.7
1906	-----	8,468,928	-----
1915	-----	12,215,814	-----
[Source: Taken from <i>Verslag omtrent den Post- en Telegraafdienst in Nederlandsch-Indië</i> (Batavia: Ogilvie & Co, 1891, 1892, 1893); <i>Verslag omtrent den Post- en Telegraafdienst in Nederlandsch-Indië</i> (Weltereden: Javasche Boekhandel & Drukkerij, 1907); <i>Verslag omtrent den Post- en Telegraafdienst in Nederlandsch-Indië</i> (Batavia-Weltevreden: G. Kolff & Co., 1916). Data between 1987 and 1886 are my estimation.]			

Table 2-4: Newspapers in Mail in Major Cities in 1891			
City	Newspapers	Total Mails	Percentage
Batavia	1,386,136	1,686,957	82.1
Semarang	950,362	1,596,946	59.5
Soerabaja	768,890	1,200,459	64
Djokjakarta	56,206	171,692	32.7
Weltevreden	60,087	539,835	11.1
Soerakarta	45,327	232,851	19.4
Padang	32,937	170,301	19.3
Medan	25,806	117,097	22
Makasser	10,543	94,017	11.2
[Source: Taken from <i>Verslag omtrent den Post- en Telegraafdienst in Nederlandsch-Indië</i> (Batavia: Ogilvie & Co., 1893)]			

The communications revolution paved the way for the Dutch liberals to pursue their moral mission in the Indies. In 1899, a liberal Dutch lawyer and statesman, Conrad Theodor van Deventer, published an article entitled “*Een eereschuld*” (A Debt of Honor) in the Dutch journal *De Gids*, in which he argued that the colonial government had a moral responsibility to repay the wealth that the Netherlands had extorted from the Indies.⁹⁷ Such sentiment eventually formed the motivation for the

⁹⁷ Conrad Theodor van Deventer, “Een eereschuld,” *De Gids*, No. 3 (1899), pp. 205-257.

Ethical Policy, which was announced by the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina in 1901. The Ethical Policy was endorsed by a broad coalition of Christian parties, liberals, and business interests in the Netherlands. It was in sharp contrast with the previous official doctrine that perceived the Indies as a “region for profit making” (*wingewest*).⁹⁸ It also marked the start of modern development policy, which emphasized improvement in the material living conditions of the indigenous people. An important component of the Ethical Policy was the development of Indies people after Western models under Dutch supervision.

Principal to this development was the propagation of Western-style education. Children from aristocratic families had privileged access to this modern education. The formation of a reservoir of Western-trained indigenous people would also meet the needs of government and business interests for cheap indigenous middle-level personnel. The colonial administration required more personnel for positions in newly annexed territories and for the newly set up and expanded social welfare services and educational institutions. Consequently, the period of the Ethical Policy from 1901 to 1930 saw the colonial government expanding secondary educational opportunities to the indigenous people of the Indies.⁹⁹ As the chart above shows, the number of Indonesians who obtained Western primary education jumped from 2,987 in 1900 to 74,697 in 1928, which was a twenty-five fold increase in twenty eight years, while those who graduated from Western secondary schools increased 258 times from 25 in

⁹⁸ On van Deventer and the Ethical Policy, see C. Snouck Hurgronje, “Van Deventer’s werk voor Indië,” *De Gids*, No. 79 (1915), pp. 422-446.

⁹⁹ In 1925, the government’s focus shifted to the provision of a widespread three-year elementary vocational education. The 1930 census recorded the indigenous literacy percent at 6.3 percent. In 1940, over two million indigenous students attended such schools. Dutch-medium education opened new horizons and opportunities, and was in strong demand among the indigenous population. In 1940, 65,000 to 80,000 Indonesian students were in Dutch-medium primary schools, equivalent to one per cent of the relevant age group. Around the same time, there were 7,000 Indonesian students in Dutch-medium secondary schools. A good number of students attended the Advanced Primary Education (Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs, or MULO). Although the number of enrolled students was small compared to the relevant age group, Dutch-medium education was generally of high quality and from the 1920s began to produce a generation of educated Indonesians.

1900 to 6,468 in 1928. Thus a new indigenous social class emerged; in the Java region they were considered the new *prijaji*, mostly members of the lower aristocracy who settled in urban areas.

Table 2-5: Numbers of Indonesians Obtaining Western Education, 1900-1928

Years	Average number of Indonesians in schools giving Western primary education	Average number of Indonesians in schools giving Western secondary education (incl. Mulo [grades 7-9])
1900-1904	2,987	25
1905-1909	5,175	45
1910-1914	23,910	135
1915-1919	33,516	675
1920-1924	51,308	2,602
1925	61,425	4,431
1926	64,721	4,799
1927	66,824	5,692
1928	74,697	6,468

[Source: George McT. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), p. 31.]

The local indigenous administrators (*Binnenlandsch Bestuur*, BB) were the distinct specialist branches of the Indies regime, which was divided into the European administration (*Europeesch Bestuur*) and indigenous administration (*Inlandsch Bestuur*). The European administrators extended through the colonial government's hierarchy running (from below) aspirant controller (*aspirant controleur*) and controller (*controleur*) to assistant resident (*assistent resident*), resident, and governor (*gouverneur*). The rank of controller was paired with that of regent (*boepati*) in the indigenous administration as a putative advisor to the Indonesian ruler. Since the nineteenth century, most members of the traditional class of the nobles of the robe (*prijaji*) had generally obtained a position in the indigenous administration. As the numbers of Western-educated indigenous residents grew with the implementation of the Ethical Policy, not all graduates were able to get government jobs. As more and

more members of educated indigenous population sought a place in higher society and greater, they often became trailblazers in positions as newspaper reporters, teachers, and other professions that were relatively independent of the colonial government and businesses.¹⁰⁰

Abdul Rivai and Economic Patronage

In 1906 during the governorship of General Joannes Benedictus Van Heutsz (1904-1908), an important development in press legislation took place. By Royal Decree of March 19, 1906, a system of post-publication censorship came to replace that of preventive, pre-publication censorship. Article 13 of the 1856 Printing Press Regulation was revised so that all printers or publishers were no longer obliged to submit a copy of their publication to the head of local government within twenty-four hours prior to circulation.

The main reason behind this change was the hope harbored by the colonial authorities that by letting the vernacular press speak they could grasp what was going on in the indigenous communities and what the natives were thinking. Unlike the dominant view that regards the 1906 Royal Decree as signaling a new trend in the direction of press freedom,¹⁰¹ I look at the change that took place from preventive to restrictive censorship as a shift towards introducing tougher measure of control over the press. If the decree really guaranteed press freedom, Van Heutsz might not have to provide any patronage for indigenous journalists.¹⁰² Another factor behind the

¹⁰⁰ For analyses of transformation of traditional aristocrats and growing number of educated Indonesian bureaucrats, see Robert Van Neil, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite*; Heather Sutherland, *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite: The Colonial Transformation of the Javanese Priyayi* (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979). In the 1930s, 90 percent of Indies civil servants were “natives.”

¹⁰¹ For this view, see the pioneering study of Indies censorship by Maters, *Van zachte wenk tot harde hand*.

¹⁰² It can also be argued that patronage was necessary to some extent because indigenous journalists might not be able to compete with *Indo* or Chinese own newspapers at the turn of the twentieth century. There are two reasons for this. One is the limited number of readers, while the other is a sharp competition to get advertisements, which were the main financial source for newspaper businesses.

government's adoption of post-publication censorship was that the government considered the alternative – the suppression of all potentially inflammatory print matter – as the more dangerous course. The new policy was to try to contain discontent by allowing it in certain channels where it could be kept within the bounds without endangering the public order.

The 1906 press regulation ushered in a new regime of press “limitations.” Other than the Printing Press Regulation, Articles 156 and 157 of the Penal Code concerning *persdelict* (press offence) and *sprekdelict* (speech offence) were major legal hurdles for local journalists. These two codes were installed in 1906 when the new censorship format was put into place. Even after the Indies state installed the new censorship, Dutch officials both at home and the colony mooted various proposals to curb the press, but eventually it was decided that the existing laws were adequate as I will discuss in Chapter 3.

Governor-General Van Heutsz paved the way for the indigenous press to flourish in the Indies. As he took office in October 1904, Van Heutsz changed the political circumstances surrounding the vernacular press. Van Heutsz provided secret financial support to *Bintang Hindia* in order to help an indigenous leader, Abdul Rivai and maintained a close personal relationship with Tirta Adhi Soerjo, a highly educated Javanese aristocrat who later on would be remembered as Father of the National Press.

Dr. Abdul Rivai was born in Benkoelen in 1871 as son of a teacher, and studied at the school for Javanese doctors – which later became the Training College for Native Doctors (*School tot Opleiding van Inlandsche Artsen*, STOVIA) – in Batavia from 1887 to 1895. After graduation, he worked as a government doctor in Deli, where he was also active as a journalist. In 1899 Rivai moved to Utrecht and then Amsterdam to continue his practice as doctor, while keeping up with his interest in journalism. In March 1902 Rivai and his partner, a Dutch journalist named

Clockner Brousson, launched a new journal called *Bintang Hindia* in Amsterdam and in 1903 started to publish it in Batavia.¹⁰³ *Bintang Hindia* was a good model for the Ethical Policy, because it symbolized education, progress, and native uplift that were ostensibly the new guiding principles of the colonial rule. The articles in *Bintang Hindia* confirmed the Dutch expectation that a new era had arrived in the Indies, which would modernize the colonial society. The journal itself was a sign of modernity and a vehicle for renewal of the Indies.

In 1905 Rivai published a remarkable article entitled “Kaoem Moeda” (Young Generation), which was a term referring to the group of people who, due to their Western education, had broken from the old ideas and tradition and were open to new cultural influences. *Bintang Hindia* thus developed into a hub of the “*kaoem moeda*” movement, to which numerous young indigenous elites turned their questions and comments. The journal was a great success in general with a circulation reaching 14,000 in 1903, and agents extending from Java to Sumatra and Celebes. Three-fourths of its subscribers were government employees. Although its Chinese readership also grew rapidly and reached six thousand in 1906,¹⁰⁴ *Bintang Hindia* could not stand on its own without governmental subsidies, which made the journal a semi-official government publication.¹⁰⁵

In 1910, a year after Van Heutsz was replaced by Governor-General A. W. F. Idenburg, the subsidy for *Bintang Hindia* was terminated and it ceased publishing. In this regard, Van Heutsz had played a major role in the emergence of indigenous press in Java by providing political and financial patronage to Abdul Rivai and his *Bintang Hindia*.

¹⁰³ Parada Harahap, *Riwajat Dr. A. Rivai*, (Medan: Indische Drukkerij, 1939).

¹⁰⁴ Harry A. Poeze, “Early Indonesian emancipation: Abdul Rivai, Van Heutsz and the Bintang Hindia,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, No. 145 (1989), pp. 87-107.

¹⁰⁵ Poeze, “Early Indonesian Emancipation.”

Tirto Adhi Soerjo and Political Patronage

Tirto Adhi Soerjo's journalistic activities drew attention from Governor-General Van Heutsz. Van Heutsz had encouraged Malay-language journalism; along with other Dutch *ethici*, he was deeply interested in the "native awakening." As the Director of Education, Religion, and Industry M. J. A. Abendanon (1900-1905) supported R. A. Kartini, an aristocratic Javanese girl, and helped make her a symbol of the indigenous women's emancipation; the Dutch Parliamentarian H. H. Van Kol, the director of Koningin Wilhelmina School J. Stigter, and other *ethici* also befriended Tirto. But most importantly, Tirto enjoyed direct personal access to Governor-General Van Heutsz, which accorded him immunity from bureaucratic harassment and respect from his educated countrymen, Chinese, Arabs, Eurasians, and ethical-minded Dutch.

As Indonesia's most recognized author Pramoedya Ananta Toer puts it, Tirto was not only "Father of the National Press" (*Bapak Pers Nasional*) but also the first real (self-subsidized) indigenous editor/publisher and one of the first indigenous writers. He was also the founder of modern voluntary associations in Indonesia – the Aristocrats Association (*Sarikat Prijaji*) and the Islamic Commerce Association (*Sarikat Dagang Islamiah*); the first indigenous to establish a limited liability company; arguably the first indigenous aristocrat-turned-entrepreneur; and among the earliest indigenous supporters of women's emancipation. Because of his groundbreaking activities, he was memorialized in Pramoedya's novel as the "pioneer" (*sang pemula*) of the Indonesian national awakening.¹⁰⁶

Tirto Adhi Soerjo was born in 1880 in Blora, East Java, as a grandson of the Regent of Bojonegoro, R. M. T. Tirtonoto. He was educated in European Elementary Schools in Bojonegoro, Madioen, and Rembang, and in 1893/94 at the age of 13 or 14

¹⁰⁶ Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Sang Pemula*, (Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1985). For a fine review of this book, from which I owe to draw Tirto's career, see Takashi Shiraishi, "Reading Pramoedya Ananta Toer's 'Sang Pemula' [The Pioneer]," *Indonesia*, No. 44 (1987), pp. 129-139.

entered STOVIA in Batavia, as Rivai had done about a decade earlier. Already as a student of STOVIA, in 1894-1895, Tirta had begun submitting his writings to Malay-language Batavia newspapers, and then became an assistant of *Chabar Hindia Olanda* (News of Netherlands Indies), *Pembrita Betawi* (Batavian Messenger), and *Pewarta Priangan* (Priangan Courier). At the age of 20, he dropped out of STOVIA and joined *Pembrita Betawi* as an editor, and the following year in 1900, became its editor-in-chief. In 1902 Tirta reported on the trip of R. M. Ng. Prodjo Sapoetro of the Kasoenanan to Banten and exposed a scandalous plot by Resident of Madioen J. J. Donner to depose the Regent of Madioen, Brotoningrat. This kind of report made him a star journalist. In 1903 he started his own newspaper, *Soenda Brita* (Soenda News), with financial support from the Regent of Tjiandjoer R. A. A. Prawiradiredja; it was the first newspaper financed, managed, edited, and published by an indigene.

In 1904, Tirta became the editor of *Staatsblad Melajoe* (the Malay-language edition of the Dutch *Staatsblad*) and of *Oranje Nassau*, while continuing his editor/administrator-ship in *Soenda Brita*. Three years later, he started the weeklies *Medan Prijaji* (Aristocrats' Arena) and *Soeloeh Keadilan* (Beacon of Justice) with the financial support from Regent Prawiradiredja and Sultan Bacan Pangeran Oesman Sjah. A year later, together with Hadji Mohammad Arsad and Pangeran Oesman, Tirta established Java Bookstore and Printing and Stationery Dealership Ltd. (*NV Javansche Boekhandel en Drukkerij en Handel in Schrijfbehoeften*) "Medan Prijaji." It was the first limited company ever established by an indigenous Indonesian, which then owned one of the first indigenous printing houses. Subscribers to *Medan Prijaji* were encouraged to buy the company's shares, and reduced subscription rates were offered to those who became its shareholders.

Medan Prijaji was the most important newspaper that Tirta edited and published, and was originally conceived as the organ of the Sarekat Prijaji. As the

journal's subtitle declared, *Medan Prijaji* was intended to reflect "the voice of all Rulers, actual and intellectual Aristocrats, Native Aristocrats and merchants, officials and merchants of other colonized nations (*bangsa*) that is equivalent to Natives, all over the Netherlands Indies."¹⁰⁷ Using this medium, Tirta confronted injustices, tyranny, abuses, exploitation, and fraudulent scheming committed by Dutch and native officials, from the Resident level down to village chiefs. In so doing he created his own brand of journalism, which was to be inherited by the indigenous movement (*pergerakan*) leaders of the 1910s.

Aside from his journalistic activities, Tirta maintained his interest in establishing and managing voluntary associations. One organization with the potential for significant social influence among Indonesian natives was Boedi Oetomo (Noble Endeavor), an organization that was established in 1908 for native aristocratic intellectuals and is celebrated in Indonesian history as the first articulation of the "native awakening."¹⁰⁸ Boedi Oetomo owed its prominent position to Governor-General Idenburg who blessed its activity and to Douwes Dekker, an *Indo* journalist, who enthusiastically reported its activity in the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*. Yet despite Boedi Oetomo's prominence and Tirta's Javanese background, Tirta received greater guidance from the Chinese model for organizational management and strategy. The movement for social and educational organizations such as the *Tiong Hwa Hwee Koan* (THHK, Chinese Association) established by Batavian Chinese in 1900 caught his attention. The Chinese succeeded in boycotting the Amsterdam Trade Association (*Handelsvereeniging*) and in protecting the commercial interests of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (*Siang-hwee*).¹⁰⁹ From reading about their activities in

¹⁰⁷ Pramoedya, *Sang Pemula*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁸ Akira Nagazumi, *The Dawn of Indonesian Nationalism: The Early Years of the Budi Utomo, 1908-1918* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1972).

¹⁰⁹ Tirta Adhi Soerjo, "Gerakan Bangsa Cina di Surabaya Melawan Handelsvereniging Amsterdam," in Pramoedya, *Sang Pemula*, pp. 189-192.

newspapers, Tirta in 1906 founded the union of Javanese aristocrats, *Sarikat Prijaji*, whose purpose was to promote education among the sons of indigenous aristocrats.

Tirta's strength might have also caused his undoing. Those whom he had "shot at with bow and arrow" and who felt their persons and careers had been tarnished by his investigative reporting did not forget what he had done to them. They waited for the right time to strike back. Over the course of his numerous exposés of scandals, Tirta's name and activities were recorded in the files, dossiers and other documents developed by the Indies State and could be used against him in the future.

The time came when Van Heutsz left office in 1909 and A. W. F. Idenburg took over. Idenburg was another proponent of the Ethical Policy, but the new Governor-General's "pet" was not Tirta, but the organization Boedi Oetomo. After the Islamic Association (*Sarekat Islam*, SI) was born in 1911, its founder R. M. Oemar Said Tjokroaminoto who was popular all over Java, also became Idenburg's favorite. Tirta, in other words, had lost his powerful patron and protector within the Indies state. Within a few months he found himself serving a two-month exile in Lampoeng from March to May 1910 due to a charge of *persdelict*.¹¹⁰

This *persdelict* case exemplified the consequences of losing political patronage. In the middle of 1909, Tirta finally had to stand in a court for natives and present his own defense statements against the prosecutor's accusations. He was accused by an Aspirant Controleur,¹¹¹ A. Simon, due to his article "*Betapa Satu Pertolongan Diartikan*" ("How An Assistance Has Been Perceived") published in *Medan Prijaji*, no. 24, in July 30, 1908. The article covered and offered commentary

¹¹⁰ Tirta Adhi Soerjo, "Oleh-oleh dari Tempat Pembuangan," in Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Sang Pemula*, pp. 243-288.

¹¹¹ Aspirant Controleur was the lowest level of Dutch civil service.

on a legal case marked by a typical abuse of power by the local authority, in this case during a village election.¹¹²

It begins with a description of the day the *Wedono* (middle-ranking official of the native territorial bureaucracy) of Cankrep, Mas Tjokrosantono, sent a letter to Tirto requesting to stop his subscription to *Medan Prijaji*. But his request was not followed because he had sent his letter to the chief editor (Tirto) instead of to the administrator who was in charge of subscriptions. A few months prior to this incident, a villager from Bapangan, Tjankrep, named Soerodimedjo, had come to see Tirto in Bogor¹¹³ to report on his cause. This villager recounted that he had won in an election for village head, but the person with the second most votes had later been appointed as the village head instead of him. This person was supported by a European, the Aspirant Controleur A. Simon. The election itself was coordinated by the Wedono, who also supported the second person. Because of the election problem, quarrel and chaos had ensued in the village. Soerodimedjo was held responsible for the chaos, and was subsequently caught and sentenced to 14 days in prison. In view of these injustices done to him, Soerodimedjo had come to Tirto for protection. With Tirto's assistance and an introductory letter, Soerodimedjo was able to see the Governor-General in the afternoon and asked to be released from legal punishment. On sight, the Governor-General granted his wish.

We are told that several days later, on his way to Jogjakarta, we are told that Tirto went to see Soerodimedjo. He learnt that the case had indeed been reexamined by Aspirant Controleur A. Simon, but apparently the latter had also questioned the villager as to why he had asked for the case to be reviewed. At this point in the article Tirto criticized the Aspirant Controleur by saying that everyone who has been unjustly

¹¹² The *persdelict* case below is taken from "Persdelict: Umpatan: A. Simon Kontra R. M. Tirto Adhi Soerjo" in Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Sang Pemula*, pp. 208-216.

¹¹³ "Bogor" used to be called "Buitenzorg" in colonial days.

punished naturally wants to clear his name. Furthermore, the Aspirant Controleur apparently had also asked the villager how much money the latter had spent for Tirto's assistance. To this, Tirto remarked in the article that if the Aspirant Controleur had really asked such a question, he also wanted to ask the Aspirant Controleur the same question, that is, how much money the person who had won the second most votes had to spend in order to become the village head. Further we are told that because of such intimidation, Tirto sent a telegram to the Regent of Poerworedjo, asking him to protect the villager.

Tirto's article, published in *Medan Prijaji*, demonstrated how he dealt with local authorities who were corrupt or abused their power. For this particular article, Aspirant Controleur Simon had sued Tirto. The charges against Tirto were twofold. One was that he had falsely accused the Aspirant Controleur and the Wedono of malpractice in conducting the election; the second was that he had humiliated the Aspirant Controleur by calling him a "whipper-snapper."

In court, the reported exchanges between the public prosecutor and Tirto went like this (in dialogue format):¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Extracted from the original text in Pramoedya, *Sang Pemula*, pp. 212-214.

ditanyakan siapakah yang menulis karangan itu. [...]
kita jawab yang itu adalah tulisan kita sendiri. [...] tidak ada satu karangan atau kabar boleh dimuat dalam *Medan Prijaji* jika tidak dengan itta kita. [...]
apakah tulisan kita itu ditujukan pada Mas Tjokrosentono, Wedono Cangkep, dan A. Simon, Aspirant Controleur Purworejo, dan kita jawab "ya." [...]
kita tulis itu karena kita murka, murka tiada hingga, ya marah besar, karena bangsa kita, si seperempat manusia, sudah dibikin sesuka-sukanya oleh pegawai, yang semestinya menjaga keselamatan si seperempat manusia yang lemah dan tidak berdaya itu.
Tahukah, tuan, bahwa perkataan "snot-aap" [...] adalah suatu penistaan dan hinaan [...]?
[Kita jawab: "di antara snot-aap snot-aap boleh jadi kalimat itu sutu penistaan atau penghinaan, tetapi di antara orang yang sempurna budi-pekertinya kalimat itu bukan kalimat penistaan. Bukankah sepanjang pendapat Prof. Najon [...] bahwa sebuah kalimat adalah kalimat penistaan jika kalimat itu mengenai harga diri dan harga kesopanan orang yang terkena. Dalam hal ini maka kalimat itu tak lain artinya bahwa yang menggugat adalah dari jenis rendah, jenis bodoh di antara aspirant-aspirant controleur dan karena ini pun saya berpendapat di antara assistant-assistent residen, ya malah lebih tinggi lagi, ada terdapat jenis snot-aap. [...] jadi tetap saya menyangkal pendapat si penggugat, bahwa kalimat itu tidak saya gunakan untuk menistanya.

Prosecutor: Who wrote this article?

Tirto: That is my own writing. Not one article or report can be published in *Medan Prijaji* without my permission.

P: Was the article aimed at Mas Tjokrosentono, the Wedono of Cangkreng, A. Simon, the Aspirant Controleur of Purworejo?

T: Yes. I wrote it because I was infuriated, infuriated beyond words, because our people (*bangsa*), the one-quarter of mankind (*si seperempat manusia*), have been treated unjustly by officials, who were supposed to look after these weak and powerless one-quarter humans.

P: Are you aware that the word “snot-aap” is a disgrace and an insult?

T: Among the snot-aaps, the sentence may be a disgrace and an insult. But among those who have untainted wisdom, the sentence is not an insult.

According to Professor Najon [...] a sentence is an insult if it concerns the other person’s integrity and civility. In this case the sentence only means that the accuser is of the low level, ignorant type of assistant controllers, and I would even venture to say that among assistant residents, yes, even higher, you can

Tuan sudah katakan, bahwa Aspirant Controleur A. Simon dan Wedono Mas Tjokrosentono menerima sogokan (semir) dari lurah yang diangkat itu?

Tidak, itu tidak benar. Karena Aspirant Controleur Simon menggunakan kemerdekaan bertanya pada Soerodimedjo, yang telah saya tolong itu, berapa saya dapat upah dari dia, maka saya pun menggunakan kemerdekaan bertanya, berapakah lurah yang diangkat itu membayar, meski tidak mendapat suara pemilih lebih dari Soerodimedjo, apa lagi sehingga Soerodimedjo yang dapat suara pemilih terbanyak [...]

Aspirant Controleur sudah selayaknya mengetahui bahwa seorang redaktur, seorang jurnalis, membela orang, menolong orang *karena kewajibannya*, jadi bukan karena *diupah* sebagai juga dia, Aspirant Controleur, menolong orang kecil menurut kewajibannya, jadi bukan karena omkooping (suap). Karena itu dengan hak mutlak saya boleh mengatakan dia adalah snot-aap Aspirant Controleur dan dia seorang pegawai pembikin kekusutan alias pegawai broddelaar atau pegawai stumperaar, karena pegawai yang patut dicintai mesti dan wajib mengetahui, bahwa seorang jurnalis adalah pengawal pikiran umum, atau wakil rakyat, wakil penduduk, laksana Permaisuri Dunia sebagaimana Kaisar Wilhelm telah menggelari pers, jadi bekerja menurut kewajibannya, bukan karena suap]. Karena Simon, Aspirant Controleur, dengan pertanyaannya sudah menyerang kewajiban saya sebagai jurnalis, yang saya pegang tinggi, sudah layak kalau bukan saja menjadi murka, marah besar [...]

find this snot-aap type. [...] so I deny the accuser's opinion, that my sentence is to insult him.

P: Did you also say, that Aspirant Controleur A. Simons and Wedono Mas Tjokrosentono accepted bribery from the person elected as village head?

T: No, that's not true. Because Aspirant Controleur Simon had taken the liberty to ask Soerodimedjo, the person I had helped, how much fee I had received from him, I also took the liberty to ask, how much the appointed village head had paid, even though Soerodimedjo had received more votes [...]. As Aspirant Controleur he should have known that as an editor, a journalist, protecting the people is my his job, not because I am being paid, just as he, an Aspirant Controleur, helps the little people as his duty, not because of bribes. Because of this, I categorically called him a snot-aap Aspirant Controleur and that he was an incompetent official [...], because a respectable official should have known, that a journalist is a guardian of public opinion, a representative of the people, representative of the population [...], so he works according to duty, not for bribes. Because Simon, the Aspirant Controleur, with his questions had attacked my [performing of my] duty as journalist, which I hold in high regard, naturally I have become not only very angry, but infuriated [...].

Tirto's fierce and satirical writing style must have been enjoyable to read, especially for an audience that included the powerless people and exploited persons of Indies society as well as liberal minded intellectuals. However, his political clout and immunity only worked so long as he remained under the patronage of the Governor-General. At the end of the trial, Tirto explicitly claimed his special rights as a member of the aristocratic class, so that the judge would not mistakenly treat him like the villager Soerodimedjo. It appears that Tirto himself realized that he had lost his

political and legal immunity and now had to stand on his own feet, relying on his aristocratic credentials.

When Tirta returned from his imprisonment, the number of subscribers of *Medan Prijaji* was over 2000. By this time, however, *Medan Prijaji* had been confronted with a steady lack of advertisements, because most European companies had stopped advertising with the newspaper, putting it into a difficult situation financially. On August 23, 1912 *Medan Prijaji* published its last issue and ceased publication.

Rivai and Tirta's cases exemplify how the ethical ideology, manifested most directly in the Governor-General's patronage, provided opportunities to "indigenous" journalists and press; and how, in turn, the Indies government "tamed" indigenous intellectuals and influenced the way they asserted themselves (and their voices) in the increasingly vital vernacular print culture. That one or two prominent indigenous journalists received "protection" (therefore immunity and credibility) from the highest authority in the land shows the specific way the Ethical Policy brought into existence not only "press freedom," but also an "indigenous press" in the first decade of the twentieth century. The number of indigenous vernacular press was still small, and yet the Ethical Policy provided a space where voices of the colonized people could be expressed relatively freely under the guardianship of the authorities. It is worth noting that this "protection" did not correspond with nor was written into the Press Regulation of 1906, and yet has given rise to an important feature, which later on would be called "the national press."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Governor-General Van Heutsz's patronage targeted a handful of indigenous intellectuals and fostered indigenous journalists in Java, but Sumatra experienced a different dynamism in developing journalism since the dawn of the twentieth century. Being on the periphery of the Indies, no equivalent patronage worked in Sumatra where pure business competition emerged in the field of newspapers. As the center of commerce and trade in West Sumatra, Padang functioned as the center of vernacular publications and press. Private journalists and businessmen competed for a limited number of readers and advertisements.

“If I were, for a moment, a Dutchman...”

On July 19, 1913, one of the most controversial political essays ever written by an Indonesian was published in the Dutch-language newspaper *De Expres* in Bandoeng. It was authored by a Javanese aristocrat, Soewardi Soerjaningrat (1889-1959), and was also published as a pamphlet on the same day.¹¹⁶ The essay was titled “*Als ik eens Nederlander was...*” (“If I were, for a moment, a Dutchman...”) with an appendix of its Malay translation by Abdoel Moeis. It ironically questions the moral justification of the Dutch government asking the colonized people of the Indies to contribute to and participate in the celebration of the Dutch Independence Day. The pamphlet stirred up consternation among the Dutch authorities, resulting in severe

As was the case in Java, since the 1880s vernacular newspapers in Sumatra had been published either under Dutch, *Indo*, or Chinese ownership. In 1905 however Padang saw the first indigenous-owned newspaper, *Insulinde* (Archipelago). Dja Endar Moeda co-purchased the newspaper with a Dutch journalist, J. C. Holtzappel (In 1928 when the first the radio conversation between the Indies and the Netherlands was held, Holtzappel was invited to give a short talk. “Het eerste Radio-kruisgesprek Indië-Holland,” *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, April 2, 1928.). But Dja Endar Moeda does not seem to have been a good businessman. Born in Padang Sidempoean in 1861, Dja Endar Moeda as a Southern Batak attended Dutch schools and the Teachers’ Training School in his hometown. After having returned from a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1893, he began his own private school in Padang, as well as became an editor of *Pertja Barat* (Western Sumatra). In 1901 he sat on the editorial board of *Insulinde*, and bought it in 1905. In 1906 he moved to Koeta Radja, Atjeh, and started *Pemberita Atjeh* (Atjeh News), which existed only for three years. He was not successful in the newspaper business there. Then he moved to Medan where he set up the Sjarikat Tapanoeli printing house with some Batak businessmen. In January 1910 in his capacity as editor-in-chief he started to publish *Pewarta Deli* (Messenger of Deli). But after a short stay in Medan, he returned to Koeta Radja and began *Bintang Atjeh* (Star of Atjeh) in June 1911, which ceased to exist in 1913.

It appears that Dja Endar Moeda was a controversial figure in the newspaper business in Sumatra. Although absent from Padang, he continued to serve as the chief editor of *Pertja Barat*. According to Ahmad Adam, the newspaper was “the most influential and lasted the longest” in Padang at the turn of the century. Dja Endar Moeda regularly contributed propagandistic articles on modern education and social progress. But in 1911 *Pertja Barat* often expressed racial hostility towards the Chinese. Probably due to a series of charges of libel and seditious tendencies, Dja Endar Moeda fell victim to the press law (*persdelict*), and because of it his press business went down and the newspaper ceased to exist in 1912. On the development of the Malay language press in Padang, see Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, pp. 146-147.

¹¹⁶ R. M. Soewardi Soerjaningrat, “Als ik eens Nederlander was...,” in E. F. E. Douwes Dekker, Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo and R. M. Soewardi Soerjaningrat, *Onze Verbanning: Publicatie der Officieel Bescheiden, Toegelicht met Verslagen en Commentaren, betrekking hebbende op de Gouvernements-Besluiten van den 18en Augustus 1913, nos. 1a en 2a, Regelende de Toepassing van Artikelen 47 R.R.*, (Schiedam: Drukkerij DeToekomst, 1913).

penalties not only for its author, but also his associates. Who was Soewardi and why did his writing so upset the Indies authorities?

Born on May 2, 1889 as the second son of Pangeran (Prince) Soerjaningrat, like Rivai and Tirta, Soewardi Soerjaningrat¹¹⁷ also graduated from STOVIA. In 1908 he was involved in the founding of Boedi Oetomo, serving as its first secretary. In 1909 he was forced to abandon his studies due to financial hardship, and thus resigned from his activity in Boedi Oetomo. In 1911 he moved to Jogjakarta, where he worked at a pharmaceutical factory, and began contributing articles to newspapers and magazines, thereby later attracting Douwes Dekker's attention. In 1912, at Dekker's request, Soewardi moved to Bandoeng to take up full-time editorship of *De Expres*. In Bandoeng Soewardi joined the Indies Party (*Indische Partij*) founded by Dekker and also became head of the Bandoeng branch of the Islamic Association (SI). In July 1913, Soewardi along with Tjipto Mangoenkoesomo (1886-1943) and Douwes Dekker (1879-1952), the grandnephew of famous author Eduard Douwes Dekker (Multatuli) who wrote *Max Havelaar*, established the Native Committee for the Commemoration of One Hundred Years of Dutch Liberty (*Inlandsch Comité tot Herdenking van Nederlands Honderdjarige Vryheid*), shortened as Native Committee (*Comité Boemi Poetra*) in Bandoeng.

Ernest François Eugene Douwes Dekker was born in Pasoeroean, East Java, in 1879 to a Dutch father and German-Japanese mother.¹¹⁸ After having studied at a top Dutch high school in Batavia, E. F. E. Douwes Dekker worked briefly at a coffee estate and subsequently at a sugar factory. At the outbreak of the Boer War in South

¹¹⁷ Soewardi, later known as Ki Hadjar Dewantara, founded the nationalistic Taman Siswa School system in July 1922. A fine study of Dewantara and the Taman Siswa School is Tsuchiya, *Democracy and Leadership*.

¹¹⁸ Paul Van Der Veur, "Introduction to a Socio-Political Study of the Eurasian of Indonesia," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1955), pp. 156-176; Paul Van Der Veur, "E. F. E. Douwes Dekker: Evangelist for Indonesian Political Nationalism," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Aug. 1958), pp. 551-566.

Africa, he volunteered his services to fight the British. Captured and held a prisoner of war in Ceylon for two years, in 1903 he returned to Java. Dekker started to work as an editorial staff at leading Dutch-language newspapers such as *Soerabaiaasch Handelsblad* (Soerabaja), *Locomotief* (Semarang), and *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* (Batavia). His experience shaped his critical view of Western colonialism. Dekker even criticized the newly formulated Ethical Policy, which focused on education, irrigation, transmigration, and decentralization of the Indies, and maintained instead that self-government should be granted. In Batavia his house was located near STOVIA and became a “clubhouse as well as reading room and library” for STOVIA students.¹¹⁹ On May 20, 1908, a provisional student committee was formed and named Boedi Oetomo.¹²⁰

Coincidentally, 1913 was the year when the Netherlands celebrated the centenary of its liberation from Napoleon’s rule. In the abovementioned pamphlet Soewardi relished the irony: “What a joy, what a pleasure it would be to be able to commemorate such a very great day.” He reflects on the good fortune of the patriotic Dutch “to whom it is given to celebrate such a jubilee. For I am a patriot, too, and just like a Dutchman with pure nationalist intent loves his Fatherland, so do I love my own Fatherland, more than I can say.” But then Soewardi goes on to say how unwise it was for the Dutch people to hold their celebrations of freedom in the Indies;

¹¹⁹ Dr. Soetomo and Goenawan Mangoenkoesoemo were two frequent visitors there. Robert Van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1960).

¹²⁰ In 1910 Dekker moved to Bandoeng after staying for several years in Europe, and joined the Bandoeng branch of the Indische Bond, a friendship association for Eurasians. He advocated the formation of the Indies Party (*Indische Partij*) from the Indische Bond, so that all residents of the Indies would be free to join. In December 1912 the Indies Party was officially inaugurated. Meanwhile, Dekker began to publish *De Expres*, through which he pushed for the reorganization of the Indische Bond as a political force. From 1911 to 1912 Dekker also organized rallies to gather support across Java. His political activity and the formation of the Indies Party drew government’s attention. The Indies government regarded the party as a threat to the peace and order of the Indies and refused to recognize it as a legitimate association; hence as of April 1913 the Indies Party was obliged to suspend its activities. S. L. Van Der Wal, (ed.), *De opkomst van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlands-Indië. Een bronnenpublikatie* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1967), pp. 234-241. On the activity of Boedi Oetomo, Nagazumi, *The Dawn of Indonesian Nationalism*.

If I were, for a moment, a Dutchman, I would not organize an independence celebration in a country where the independence of the people has been stolen. Thinking along this line, it is not only unfair but also improper to order the natives to give donations to the celebration fund. The mere thought of preparing the independence ceremony is enough to humiliate them and now we even rob their pockets. It is indeed a moral and material humiliation. [...]

If I were, for a moment a Dutchman, I would protest against the wish to have a celebration. I would write in every newspaper declaring that such an intention is wrong. I would warn all my fellow colonists about the danger in holding an independence celebration at this moment. I would advise all Dutchmen not to hurt the feelings of the people in the Indies who have begun to have the courage to disobey us and who may in fact do so. Indeed I would protest as hard as my powers let me.

But [...] I am not a Dutchman, I am only a brown-colored person from the tropics, a native of the Dutch colony, and because of that I will not protest. [...]

At the most it reminds us that we are not a free people and that the “Dutch do not give independence to us” so long as Mr. Idenburg still rules the country. Thus we, however absurd it may seem, will get a lesson from the ceremony: that it is a duty for everyone to commemorate the independence of their people.¹²¹

¹²¹ Soewardi Soerjaningrat, “Als ik eens Nederlander was, ...,” pp. 68, 69, 73. Translations were taken from Savitri Prastiti Scherer, “Harmony and Dissonance: Early Nationalist Thought in Java,” (MA Thesis, Cornell University, 1975), pp. 300, 301, and 302, although I made minor changes. One major change, however, is a Dutch word “eens,” which should be translated into “for the moment.” I owe this point to Benedict Anderson.

When the Resident of Bandoeng, T. J. Janssen, read Soewardi's pamphlet, he immediately reported it to the authorities in Batavia. On July 25, a justice official, H. V. Monsanto, arrived in Bandoeng from Batavia. Judging the pamphlet to be dangerous and in contravention of Article 26 of the Press Regulations, Monsanto interrogated the author and members of the Native Committee. The following day he ordered that the pamphlets be confiscated.¹²² Correspondingly, the public prosecutor of Bandoeng confiscated Soewardi's pamphlet on the grounds that it contravened Article 26 of the Press Regulations, which forbids "the belittling of Dutch authority and the instigation of hostility among the peoples of the Indies."¹²³ In the afternoon of July 30, Soewardi, Abdoel Moeis, Tjipto, and Wignjadisastra were arrested and held in custody; all of them were members of the Native Committee, whose "dangerous writing activities" Janssen considered to be seditious and disruptive of public order and peace. Meanwhile, Douwes Dekker, who had been taking a short trip to Europe, returned to Java on August 1. Immediately he wrote an article in *De Expres* of August 5 entitled "*Onze Helden: Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo en Soewardi Soerjaningrat*" (Our Heroes: Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo en Soewardi Soerjaningrat), "in which he praised them as heroes, martyrs, and pathfinders, who had set an example for those who would come after."¹²⁴ He was detained the same day.¹²⁵

For the charge of violating Article 26 of the Press Regulations alone, offenders were liable to imprisonment for one to three months and a fine of 10 to 500 guilders. Governor-General Idenburg, however, applied Article 47 of the Constitutional Ordinance, which vested him "exorbitant rights." After the three leaders – Dekker, Tjipto and Soewardi – had been permitted to write a defense against the charges

¹²² Mr. 1596/1913 in Verbaal 25 September 1913, No. 56.

¹²³ Mr. 1695/1913 in Verbaal 25 September 1913, no. 56.

¹²⁴ Tsuchiya, *Democracy and Leadership*, p. 22.

¹²⁵ Van Der Veur, "Introduction to a Socio-Political Study of the Eurasian of Indonesia," pp. 173-174.

against them, mainly “to satisfy the requirements of the law,”¹²⁶ on August 18, Idenburg announced the banishment from Java of all whose names appeared on the pamphlet in question. Originally Dekker was to be exiled to Koepang in Timor, Tjipto on Banda Island in Ambon, and Soewardi on Bangka Island.¹²⁷ On August 27, however, Idenburg changed his original intention and instead gave permission for all three to go to the Netherlands, where Dekker stayed for the next five years, while Tjipto for about one year, and Soewardi for about six.

Soewardi also penned a satirical pamphlet, among his first articles ever, in which a Javanese aristocrat used the Dutch language to assert his view on colonial rule. The administration found it disturbing not for the fact that it was written in Dutch, but because it was translated into Malay and appended to the Native Committee’s propaganda literature. Being translated into Malay meant that their opinions could now reach a much larger audience, in particular the colonized people who now could visualize a Javanese making remarks on the colonial rule. Furthermore, the variant of Malay language being used in the pamphlets was not the rigid “high” Malay of the manuscript tradition, but the “low” and casual variant, generally used in urban areas and heavily mixed with Dutch, Javanese, Minangkabau, Hokkien, and other languages.

At a meeting of the Council of the Indies on July 31, Governor-General Idenburg stressed his point:

The major difference between the situation today and that of six months ago [when the Indische Partij was formed] is that then activities were confined to

¹²⁶ Van Der Veur, “Introduction to a Socio-Political Study of the Eurasian of Indonesia,” p. 174.

¹²⁷ Van der Wal, *De Opkomst van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlands-Indië*, pp. 326-329.

the newspapers in Dutch, whereas now everything is also published in Malay.¹²⁸

Although Soewardi, Tjipto and Dekker had often expressed strong critical attitudes towards the Dutch colonial rule in many Dutch newspapers and periodicals, it was not until the article “If I were, for a moment, a Dutchman...,” and especially its translation in Malay, that the Indies government took them seriously and regarded them as a potential threat to the stability of the colonial society. The authorities were also concerned with the influence of the Native Committee’s publications over the followers of the Islamic Association (which, however, turned out to be insignificant).¹²⁹

Persdelict

In 1914 a revision of the Penal Code was introduced. It took the British Indian Press Act of 1910 as a model. It adopted the provisions of Articles 124a and 153a in the British Penal Code in India and introduced provisions for a Penal Code for Europeans and a Penal Code for Natives. The revision made possible the tightening of existing provisions in the Press Act.

The Indies authorities had referred to the 1910 British Indian Press Act, which allowed the government to take action when the needs of protecting public order and tranquility required it. It gave sweeping powers to the provincial governments¹³⁰ in

¹²⁸ Mr. 1695/1913 in Verbaal 25 September 1913, no. 56.

¹²⁹ Van der Wal, *De Opkomst van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlands-Indië*, p. 326.

¹³⁰ At the turn of the twentieth century, British India consisted of eight provinces that were administered either by a Governor or a Lieutenant-Governor. Eight major provinces were Burma, Bengal, Madras, Bombay, United Provinces, Central Provinces and Berar, Punjab, and Assam. See Barbara Daly Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

suppressing the propaganda for the civil disobedience movement. Section 4 (1) reads as follows:

Whenever it appears to the Local Government that any printing-press in respect of which any security has been deposited as required by section 3 is used for the purpose of printing or publishing any newspaper, book or other document containing any words, signs or visible representations which are likely or may have a tendency, directly or indirectly, whether by inference, suggestion, allusion, metaphor, implication or otherwise:

- (a) to incite to murder or to any offence under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908, or to any act of violence, or
- (b) to seduce any officer, soldier or sailor in the Army or Navy of His Majesty from his allegiance or his duty, or
- (c) to bring into hatred or contempt His Majesty or the Government established by law in British India or the administration of justice in British India or any Native Prince or Chief under the suzerainty of His Majesty, or any class or section of His Majesty's subjects in British India, or to excite disaffection towards His Majesty or the said Government or any such Prince or Chief, or
- (d) to put any person in fear or to cause annoyance to him and thereby induce him to deliver to any person any property or valuable security, or to do any act which he is not legally bound to do, or to omit to do any act which he is legally entitled to do, or
- (e) to encourage or incite any person to interfere with the administration of the law or with the maintenance of law and order, or

(f) to convey any threat of injury to a public servant, or to any person in whom that public servant is believed to be interested, with a view to inducing that public servant to do any exercise of his public functions, the Local Government may, by notice in writing to the keeper of such printing-press, stating or describing the words, signs or visible representations which in its opinion are of the nature described above, declare the security deposited in respect of such press and all copies of such newspaper, book or other document whenever found to be forfeited to His Majesty.”¹³¹

These recognizable offences included violence or directly or indirectly expressing approval or admiration of any such. According to the Act, any person publishing under real or fictitious name who had committed or was alleged or represented to have committed the offence, would be punished. The 1910 Press Act required owners of printing presses and newspapers to deposit a security of up to 5,000 rupees, which could be forfeited for publishing any objectionable material including criticism of the government. If the security bond was forfeited, the next one would be heavier, and a third offence meant that the printing press could be stopped. The Act also incorporated a provision that the governments of both Punjab and the United Provinces had recommended, which was the need to expand the provisions of the bill in order to encompass writings that excited antipathy between racial and religious groups. The Act included a clause providing for forfeiture of a security bond in any case in which a press had been used “to bring into hatred or contempt any class or

¹³¹ S. Natarajan. *A History of the Press in India* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962), pp. 358-359. This book contains all major press legislation in British India in pages 325-377. On the Indian Press Act 1910, see also Great Britain Parliament, *Copy of the Indian Press Act, 1910, and proceedings of the legislative council of the Governor-General of India relating thereto* (London: Darling & Son, 1910); Milton Israel, *Communications and Power: Propaganda and the Press in the Indian Nationalist Struggle, 1920-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 3-10, 50, 55.

section of His Majesty's subjects in British India." There was also a provision for search and seizure of all copies of an offensive publication.¹³² Over the next decade the 1910 Press Act penalized more than 350 presses and 300 newspapers, and proscribed more than 500 publications.¹³³

Unlike the British Indian regime, the Indies government did not seem to engage in debates on the dangers of obscene publications in the Indies. In the course of debates on press control, the question was whether the Indies government needed to change its policy from pre-publication censorship to post-publication one.¹³⁴ All political expression and freedom of speech were directly translated into matters of public order in a way that made any other consideration trivial or irrelevant. The Indies state viewed some publications as a dangerous source of nuisance or public disorder in the society, despite the fact that it had encouraged the development of indigenous press.

The 1914 revision of the Dutch Penal Code for the Indies colony resulted in the introduction of Article 63a and b and 66a and b, the former being for Europeans and the latter for the Natives. Article 66a of the Penal Code for Natives stipulated that whoever by words or signs or displays or in other ways aroused or fostered animosity, hate or contempt against the government of the Netherlands or the Netherlands Indies, would be punished with hard labor, in chains, from five to ten years. Article 66b provided that whoever "by words or signs or displays or in other ways arouses or fosters animosity, hate or contempt between the different groups of the Netherlands' subjects or the inhabitants of the Netherlands Indies will be punished with

¹³² G. R. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India: A Study of Controversy, Conflict and Communal Movements in Northern India, 1923-1928* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1975), p. 22.

¹³³ Sanderson Beck, *South Asia, 1800-1950* (Goleta: World Peace Communications, 2008), p. 128.

¹³⁴ In the British India, the state perceived obscenity largely in terms of a threat to its authority, and hence sought to regulate it through deployment of the law. Regulating the obscene was considered a means of controlling the contents of publications. See Heath, "Creating the Moral Colonial Subject."

imprisonment of six days to five years. An attempt to commit this offence is punishable with hard labor, without chain, for a period not exceeding five years.”¹³⁵

Apart from the above articles, the Indies government also introduced Articles 154-157 in the Penal Code,¹³⁶ known popularly as the “hatred-sowing” articles (*haatzaai-artikelen*). They were meant further to equip the provisions of the Printing Press Regulations. With these new provisions the government felt more confident that it could prevent or deter anyone or any party from arousing hatred and contempt (*haat en minachting*) towards the government, or from arousing hatred and contempt (*haat en verachting*) between different groups of the population.

Equipped with the 1906 press regulations and *persdelict* articles of 1914, the Indies state was about to face indigenous political development that thrived through mobilization as well as discussion and propaganda in political newspapers. The question of how to develop press monitoring, however, was yet not settled and a new institutional arrangement was still to come.

¹³⁵ Ahmat Adam, “Radical Journalism and Press Persecution in Java: 1914-1918,” *JEBAT*, No. 20 (1992), pp. 94-95.

¹³⁶ Oemar Seno Adji, *Pers: Aspek-Apek Hukum* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 1974), pp. 101-107; Saëroen, *Dibelakang Lajar Journalistiek Indonesia*, pp. 80-81.

CHAPTER 3

THE AGE OF PRESS MONITORING

“The meaning of free press is not simply freedom, that is, we are free to express our thoughts or opinion without any restriction and limits, but as is everything else there are limits to the press. If we stay within the limit, we will not get into trouble. But if we cross the limit, of course we will get prohibition or punishment.” (Parada Harahap)¹³⁷

The birth of political organs and the rising tide of indigenous political and socio-economic movements that had found a voice in the indigenous press were new to the Indies state, and some Dutch officials thought it was a threat to the “tranquility and order” (*rust en orde*) of the Indies. The action taken by Dekker, Soewardi and Tjipto had opened the eyes of the Indies government to the danger of press freedom provided by the amendment 1906 of the Press Act of 1856. In the light of the events that took place in 1912 and 1913, the colonial government saw the urgency of overcoming the inadequacy of existing press laws in deterring the newly emerging indigenous journalists and activists. The contents of the vernacular press needed a much closer scrutiny by the General Secretariat, as well as the Department of Native and Arab Affairs.

¹³⁷ Parada Harahap, *Pers dan Journalistiek*, (Medan: Handel Mij. Indische Drukkerij, 1941), pp. 111-112.

Adapoen maksoednja vrijheid (kebebasan) terseboet boekanlah kebebasan semata-mata, jaitoe jang kita bebas memaparkan boeah pikiran atau pendapatn kita dengan tidak ada pelarangan dan batasnja, akan tetapi seperti segala perboeatan ada berbatas, begitoe djoegalah tentang pers, djika kita masih tinggal dalam lingkoengan batas itoe tidak akan mendapt apa-apa. Kalau kita meliwati garis, soedah barang tentoe dapat larangan atau hoekoeman.

First Press Survey

In 1912 the colonial government went through major reorganization of its structure due to new social developments in the form of political activism by the indigenous people of the Indies. The reorganization required the government to employ more Dutch bureaucrats than before. These new developments also prompted the colonial government to install a new system of surveillance in order to supply information on indigenous affairs to colonial bureaucrats.¹³⁸ The question was how to provide accurate and concise information for these bureaucrats. Since the administrative apparatus was not yet well-systematized and effective at the lower level of the bureaucracy due to the vast territory of the Indies, gathering information became a significant challenge.

Several areas of political activism that emerged in the early 1910s had set off the alarm for the colonial government. The birth of the Republic of China on January 1, 1912, brought about new hopes for Chinese communities in the Indies, because they believed that a strong modern China would help promote their social and legal status in the Dutch colony. In the same year, using Islam as a symbol, SI emerged as the first mass movement of the indigenous population in Java, and was involved in anti-Chinese violence in several cities. In 1913, the Indies Party founded by E. F. E. Douwes Dekker posed a potential threat to the Indies state, because it sought to create Indies nationalism based on a multi-racial society.

Since it appeared that the press played a significant role in all these movements, how to deal with the vernacular press became the focal point of debate among Dutch bureaucrats. In general there were two main arguments in this issue. One focused on the rise of the vernacular press and its connections with political

¹³⁸ This was suggested in the correspondence of the Adjunct-Adviser for Native Affairs, D. A. Rinkes, as this chapter will explore.

organizations, and on the need to restrict the emergent press by introducing administrative measures. The other believed that the growing indigenous press did not contribute to social anxiety; rather, it actually reflected a positive outcome of the Ethical Policy. It was clear that the liberal tendency in the Netherlands made Dutch politicians hesitant to pursue administrative measures against the vernacular press, so the debate shifted to the possibility of conducting a regular survey of the press and how to best execute it.

Monitoring the vernacular press and producing a regular summary of the news reported there thus became a major issue in the Department of Internal Affairs and the Bureau for Native and Arab Affairs. Debates and a kind of inter-department power struggle between these institutions began in 1912. My research reveals that from the beginning, the Adviser of the Bureau for Native and Arab Affairs disagreed with the Department of Internal Affairs' plan to carry out the survey of vernacular press in the department's official journal.

Regardless, in December 1912 *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* (Colonial Journal) launched the official and public version of the press summary. As its subtitle reads, the journal was "presented by the Association of Staff of the [Department of] Internal Affairs in the Netherlands Indies" (*buitgegeven door de Vereeniging van Ambtenaren bij het Binnenlandsch Bestuur in Nederlandsch-Indië*). This journal was published in The Hague, the metropole of the Dutch empire. It was designed for Dutch bureaucrats who worked on and in the Indies but had no or little knowledge of local languages, and it covered local politics, social affairs, and cultural analysis. It was considered essential reading for Dutch bureaucrats who worked in the Indies until 1942 when Japan came to take over the Indies.

The Department of Internal Affairs employed, among others, a linguist to produce a monthly survey of vernacular newspapers. An expert of Javanese language,

A. H. G. J. Walbeehm became the first official to monitor vernacular press.

Walbeehm was not only familiar with Javanese, but also with Malay. He had published three books on local languages before he was appointed to the job.¹³⁹ Along with other Dutch experts such as Pillard and Ch. P. J. Blok, Walbeehm came to monitor newspapers in the indigenous (both Malay and Javanese) and Chinese-Malay languages for a period of five years until 1916.

In his first analysis of the press summary, Walbeehm made a suggestion for modifications, the most important of which was to undertake separate surveillance for the indigenous and Indies Chinese newspapers. He maintained that these two groups of newspapers should be monitored separately, while acknowledging the challenges involved in accurately distinguishing between them. He also was aware of the fact that indigenous journalists contributed articles to Chinese newspapers and vice versa, and that sometimes it was difficult to identify clearly whose opinions were published in the newspapers (as many articles were written under pseudonyms). But intriguingly, Walbeehm surveyed both the indigenous and Chinese-Malay press almost equally. In *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* of January 1-24, 1912, he reviewed eleven indigenous press and eight Chinese-Malay newspapers. The survey of the indigenous press included *Pembrita Betawi* (Batavia Herald), *Medan Prijaji* (Aristocrat Arena), *Boedi Oetomo* (Noble Endeavor), *Taman Pewarta* (Reporters' Arena), *Bintang Soerabaja* (Soerabaja Star), *Tjahaja Sumatra* (Light of Sumatra), *Oetoesan Melajoe* (Malay Envoy), *Pertja Timoer* (Eastern Sumatra), *Pembrita Makassar* (Makassar Herald), and *Matahari Terbit* (Rising Sun), whereas those of Chinese-Malay included *Perniagaan* (Commerce), *Pantjaran Warta* (News Flash), *Tiong Hoa Wi Sien Po*

¹³⁹ The most important publication of these was a book on Javanese grammar, *Javaansche spraakkunst*. The two other books examined the local dialects of Djepara and Tegal, respectively. A. H. J. G. Walbeehm, *Javaansche spraakkunst* (Leiden: Brill, 1905); *Het dialekt van Djapâra* (Batavia: Albrecht, 's-Hage, 1897); *Het dialekt van Tegal* (Batavia: Albrecht, 1903).

(Chinese Reformist Newspaper), *Ho Po*, *Djawa Tengah* (Central Java), *Pewarta Soerabaja* (Soerabaja Messenger), and *Sinar Sumatra* (Gleam of Sumatra).

Walbeehm's expertise was limited to linguistics and he was not involved in the policy debate on the press survey. His writing style was scholarly and his purpose was not political. He was of the opinion that an ideal press summary would provide the readers with what (and how) local people were thinking, which was presumed to be different from the way Dutch people thought and understood things. This non-political intention made his selection of vernacular press rather comprehensive. His choice represented a wide geographic region, including many cities. It appears that Walbeehm's survey provided an overall picture of social, political, and cultural conditions in the colony. For instance, his very first newspaper summary covered a controversy regarding land lease for sugar and coffee cultivation. In it, Walbeehm remarked on how ignorant and underdeveloped the Javanese were when it came to running a commercial enterprise. "They are not ready for business yet" (*toch komt de Javaan niet op het denkbeeld*), he writes, even though their land is very rich. This supposedly was the reason why many Europeans came to Java – to open plantations, become entrepreneurs, and be successful in their business ventures – while the Javanese remained workers for the Europeans.¹⁴⁰

The mission and goal of the press survey and summary in *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* was clear; it attempted to understand the local (non-European) residents in the Indies, and supplied this information to the colonial bureaucrats. Like Walbeehm, the Department of Internal Affairs was of the opinion that local newspapers reflected the thoughts and deeds of local people that were rooted in their unique worldviews. It differentiated indigenous and Chinese residents in part because the colonial government regarded them as two different people with different cultural

¹⁴⁰ A. H. J. G. Walbeehm, "Persoverzicht," *Koloniaal Tijdschrift*, 1912, pp. 90-94.

backgrounds, and as such the existing colonial bureaucratic structure treated them separately. For a while it insisted on having both press surveys conducted by one team led by Walbeehm. But in the middle of the 1910s, the division of surveillance activities between different colonial government agencies became consistent with the emerging distinction being made between the indigenous and Chinese residents: the Bureau for Native and Arab Affairs concentrated on the indigenous affairs, whereas the Office for Chinese Affairs kept an eye on the Chinese in the Indies.

However, political circumstances however forced the termination of the press survey after several years. *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* ceased carrying out the summary of Javanese press in 1916 and of the Malay press in 1920. It turned out that ongoing objections from (and power struggle with) then (Adjunct-) Adviser for Native and Arab Affairs had led to the discontinuation. From the beginning the Adjunct Adviser, Dr. D. A. Rinkes, had his own idea of how vernacular press should be surveyed and he had tried to realize it all the while.

Rinkes and the Press Survey

In his capacity as Adjunct-Adviser for Native Affairs, Rinkes had expressed his idea on press survey in a confidential letter to Governor-General Idenburg as early as February 1912.¹⁴¹ Rinkes did not believe in the effectiveness of administrative measures against the press, and instead was of the opinion that the native press was not something the government should worry about. He argued that it was not necessary to toughen regulations against the press. Needed instead was effective press monitoring in the form of a regular survey, which would provide practical and valuable information to Dutch bureaucrats. In the letter, Rinkes gave a sample of a

¹⁴¹ Adjunct-adviseur voor inlandse zaken (D. A. Rinkes) aan Gouverneur-Generaal (Idenburg), Feb. 19, 1912 in S. L. Van Der Wal, (ed.), *De opkomst van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlands-Indië. Een bronnenpublikatie* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1967), pp. 70-84.

press survey that he found useful. He carefully chose twenty-two vernacular (Malay and Javanese) newspapers – *Bramartani* (The Messenger, Soerakarta), *Djawi Kanda* (Javanese Narrative), *Taman Pewarta*, *Darma Kanda* (Soerakarta), *Retna Doemila* (Jogjakarta), *Pantjaran Warta* (News Flux), *Pembrita Betawi* (Messenger of Betawi), *Perniagaän* (Commerce, Batavia), *Slompret Melajoe* (Malay Trumpet, Semarang), *Bintang Soerabaja* (Star of Soerabaja, Soerabaja), *Tjahja Timoer* (Eastern Light, Malang), *Pertja Barat* (Western Sumatra), *Oetoesan Melajoe* (Malay Envoy), *Tjahaja Sumatra* (Light of Sumatra, Padang), *Al Moenir* (Enlightenment), *Goeroe Desa* (Village Educator), *Tjaja Hindia* (Indies Light), *Pewarta S.S.* (Messengar for Railway Workers), *Pewarta Pengadilan* (Messenger of Justice), *Soeara Pagadean* (Voice of Pagadean), *Sinar Pasoendan* (Pasoendan Gleam).

Rinkes' careful selection reflected the orientation of these newspapers as well as their geographical locations. His focus lay in Java where political activism was growing and of the Dutch empire in Asia had its focal point. On the top of the list he put Javanese newspapers from Soerakarta and Jogjakarta in Central Java where SI had started to gain mass supports. Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja were the three major cities in West, Central, and East Java. From those cities, well-established Malay newspapers were chosen. Two widely read Chinese-Malay newspapers were included, *Perniagaän* and *Tjahja Timoer*, which were commerce-oriented and well-established in the Chinese community. Outside Java, Rinkes summarized three vernacular newspapers from Padang, West Sumatra, where the Islamic modernist movement, which was influenced by the non-conservative Sunni Islamic sect, Wahhabism, from the Middle East, was penetrating into the local Muslim community. These twenty-two newspapers represented a fraction of vernacular press circulating in the Indies at that time. But Rinkes' selection had a clear aim, which was to gather information and measure the socio-political temperature of different parts of the

colony. Selected newspapers were politically influential in certain communities, particularly those reflecting Islamic views and Islamic affairs.¹⁴² As the Adjunct-Adviser for Native and Arab Affairs whose main target was domestic political development and Islamic affairs, Rinkes' main concern was how to understand Islamic movements (such as SI and Wahhabism) that were growing in Java, particularly in Central Java, and in West Sumatra. It is worth noting that this concern did not imply an intention to suppress those movements. In his eyes, those movements were locally focused and had no sign of becoming a "national" threat.

This concentration on Islamic movements affected Rinkes' selection of Chinese newspapers. For Rinkes, the priority of a press survey was rightfully the indigenous press and given this focus only major Indies Chinese press was covered mainly as a matter of formality, to ensure that the survey appeared comprehensive. Rinkes' lack of concern for Chinese affairs was most obvious in his omission of *Sin Po* of Batavia, which was to become the biggest and most influential Chinese-Malay newspaper from the 1910s. *Sin Po* was not an ordinary commercial/politically neutral newspaper; it promoted Chinese nationalism among Chinese residents in the Indies. But in the eyes of Rinkes, the China-oriented nationalist movement among overseas Chinese did not constitute a threat to the Indies state. What he found more relevant was a kind of ethnic antagonism between the "natives" and the Chinese, which was largely motivated by commercial rivalry. This constituted a major factor in the formation and growth of SI since 1911. Anti-Chinese sentiment among the Muslim population could instigate social instability, and in this sense the Indies state had to take the Chinese affairs seriously. Rinkes however seems to believe that there was a

¹⁴² Ajunct-adviseur voor inlandse zaken (D. A. Rinkes) aan Gouverneur-Generaal (Idenburg), Feb. 19, 1912 in Van der Wal, *De Opkomst van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlands-Indië*, pp. 70-84.

distinct line between the Indies Chinese and the Chinese nationalist movement.¹⁴³

Therefore, he chose two Chinese-Malay newspapers that represented a moderate Chinese view.

Nevertheless, the Department of Internal Affairs did not heed his opinion and its organ, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift*, started its press survey in December 1912. Needless to say, Rinkes was frustrated with the kind of survey that *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* was conducting. In May 1913, half a year after the publication of press survey started, Rinkes wrote another confidential and detailed report to Governor-General Idenburg concerning SI. This time he argued that the abstracts prepared by the Internal Affairs did not provide a representative picture of the Indies society. In his opinion, the survey tended to select only sensational and radical items from the vernacular press. He contended that it was much more advisable to create a regular representative press abstract to keep government officials informed with what was going on, which would thus bring them closer to the indigenous society. Such close knowledge of the society would in his view be beneficial to the development of the colony as a whole.¹⁴⁴ This view indeed was very ambitious, and it should be understood in the context of Rinkes' own personal ambition to become a successful high colonial bureaucrat. Luckily for him, his detailed analysis of SI – its organization, leaders, and activities – succeeded in impressing Idenburg. In order to advance his bureaucratic career, Rinkes was eager to tame SI, which around this time both growing locally – in particular, Soerabaja, Solo, Jogjakarta, Semarang, and Bandoeng – and also gaining a “national character.”¹⁴⁵ His

¹⁴³ Even though Rinkes himself could not read Chinese, he must have gotten the idea from available colonial documents on Chinese affairs in the Indies.

¹⁴⁴ Ajunct-adviseur voor inlandse zaken (D. A. Rinkes) aan Gouverneur-generaal (Idenburg), May 13, 1913, in S. L. Van der Wal (ed.), *De Opkomst van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlands-Indië*, (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1967), pp. 171-210, especially p. 175 footnote.

¹⁴⁵ Ajunct-adviseur voor inlandse zaken (D.A. Rinkes) aan Gouverneur-generaal (Idenburg), May 13, 1913, in Van der Wal, *De Opkomst van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlands-Indië*, pp. 208-210. See also Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*, pp. 69-72.

special attention to Tjokroaminoto, the leader of Soerabaja-branch of SI and chief editor of its newspaper organ *Oetoesan Hindia*, proved that Rinkes understood the inner working of SI and had picked the right person “to tame.” In other words, contradicting his assertions of the Ethical Policy’s success in promoting progress among the natives, Rinkes was not, as ethicists believed, a liberal idealist favoring the “native awakening.” He believed that intimate contact with indigenous society was necessary and for this purpose the press survey was to be devised. In practice, this intimate contact was not with the society in general, but was directed to the Islamic community, particularly to SI. Roughly one month after this secret correspondence, in June 1913, Dr. Rinkes was promoted to be the Adviser for Native and Arab Affairs, replacing Dr. Hazeu. He was put in charge of guiding the SI’s central leadership to a path more favorable to the Indies government. Now he held considerable power over the indigenous affairs, and his position enabled him to report directly to Governor-General Idenburg.¹⁴⁶

However, despite Rinkes’ determined advocacy bureaucratic procedure did not change immediately. Walbeehm continued business as usual and made the summary of vernacular press for *Koloniaal Tijdschrift*. In 1915, two years after his promotion, Rinkes expressed once again his strong displeasure with the current press survey. While previously he had complained about the content of press abstracts, this time he expressed disapproval about the form. He pointed out that most Dutch officials were (still) indifferent to the indigenous press and their neglect of the press surveys and abstracts rendered these publications useless. In his report Rinkes raised awareness about public opinion (*publieke opinie*) in the indigenous society. He pointed out that the indigenous press covered such public opinion, which Dutch officials needed to

¹⁴⁶ Before the full-fledged secret police was formed in 1919, the Adviser for Native and Arab Affairs played a significant role in gathering information on the indigenous movement and guiding it to the path favorable for the Indies government.

both pay attention to as well as comprehend. Press abstracts were essential to achieving this level of understanding of current popular opinion in indigenous society, yet in their current format, they were not suited for the purpose. In his confidential letter to the Governor-General, Rinkes explained how the vernacular press expressed their views on the government and its activities, saying that:

During the discussion concerning the press I [Rinkes] have come to realize that a certain part of the public seems to demand a somewhat sensational tone, and that self-respecting periodicals are usually less successful than those that let their tongues run away with them, and in weekly talks and other occasions they discuss the Government, civil servants, an exhibition, a lottery in a spicy manner indeed, that is to say: they run them down.¹⁴⁷

In Rinkes' view, the vernacular press created and responded to the public opinion and public aspirations. He insisted that it was worth grasping people's view on the government, too. In order to grasp what the people thought and desired, the Indies state allowed them to speak and write. The vernacular press was the most important media to transmit public opinion. Making accurate summaries of this media therefore was an essential step towards understanding the popular mind. So Rinkes went on to propose an alternative, namely that a press summary should be published every month under the guidance of the Adviser for Native Affairs, which had an intimate relationship with local leaders. By making use of the indigenous press, he maintained, Dutch officials could understand indigenous public opinion and gain knowledge of dangerous people and even their strategies in advance.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Adviseur voor inlandse zaken (D. A. Rinkes) aan Gouverneur-generaal (Idenburg), June 7, 1915, in Van der Wal, *De Opkomst van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlands-Indië*, p. 389.

¹⁴⁸ Mr. 2280/15 in Vb. June 14, 1919 no. 26.

The Indies government feared the spread of revolutionary ideas by radical nationalists using the medium of printed materials, and therefore conceived the press survey as a way to impose further surveillance over the press. By offering such service the administration could provide up-to-date information to all civil servants, by detecting and giving details of (potential) trouble spots and troublemakers. Yet Rinkes did not propose administrative measures at all. Rather, his vision was to try to guide the “native awakening” onto a developmental path that would not be at odds with government programs.¹⁴⁹

By September 1915, the Minister for the Colonies, Mr. Th. B. Pleijte, was finally convinced with what Rinkes’ argument, and wrote a letter to Governor-General Idenburg as follows:

Curbing the press, it has been assumed, serves to stop the worst disasters from happening. I am, however, fully convinced that the gross extravagance of a free press is less dangerous for a community than the dangers, which a deeply embittered group of people could create for a society, if their mouths are stopped and they are forbidden to speak out. Every opinion expressed in the press that is worth a fight will give rise to objections, which in their turn could influence the supporters of that very opinion.¹⁵⁰

Thus with Pleijte’s support, Rinkes finally won the years-long debate concerning press monitoring and was given the green light to initiate the “proper” press survey and abstracts. The administrative measures against the press that had been discussed

¹⁴⁹ This is how Rinkes helped and guided the leadership of Tjokroaminoto and the SI at the time. See Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*, pp. 69-72.

¹⁵⁰ Minister van Koloniën (Pleijte) aan Gouverneur-generaal (Idenburg), Sept. 17, 1915, in Van der Wal, *De Opkomst van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlands-Indië*, pp. 396-397.

earlier were to be cancelled. The Department of Internal Affairs could not disregard Rinkes' powerful voice any longer. The decision by Pleijte forced this Department to reconsider its position regarding the press survey and to put an end to the role of *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* in press monitoring by 1920.

In 1916 under the guidance of Rinkes, the monthly summary of indigenous press called "Summary of the Native Press" (*Overzicht der Inlandsche Press*) began to be compiled by the Office for Native Affairs and filed in a Secret Mail Report (*Geheim Mailrapport*). The press surveys on vernacular periodicals began circulating regularly among the Dutch bureaucrats and became compulsory reading material for them. The ideal press survey and its abstracts, as imagined by Rinkes, were finally realized when the state-subsidized publishing house, Balai Poestaka (*Volkslectuur*), was reorganized in 1917 under his leadership.

Balai Poestaka As A Cultural Project

Under the Ethical Policy the Indies state claimed to promote the social wellbeing of the indigenous population. The propagation of Western-style school education was perceived as being key to achieving this goal. Although the number of enrolled students was small compared to the relevant age, the Dutch medium education was of high quality and from the 1920s began producing a new educated Indonesian elite.¹⁵¹

In order to provide reading materials for schools and graduates, the Commission for Native Schools and Popular Literature was established in 1908 with G. A. J. Hazeu, the Adviser for Native and Arab Affairs, as its head. It was considered a precautionary measure to prevent potential dangers (in the realm of culture) to the

¹⁵¹ Van Neil, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite*; Sutherland, *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite*.

Indies state. The Commission consisted of six members nominated by the Director of Education and Religion and was modeled after the *Wereldbibliotheek* in the Netherlands.¹⁵² Its mission was to select (and later on produce) proper reading materials for students of the indigenous schools and for the public libraries of the indigenous population. The Commission was to promote the “composition” of a reading environment that encouraged youth to read the right kinds of material, from the government point of view, especially for junior high school graduates by setting up libraries and popular lending stores, which provided books free of charge.¹⁵³

After being appointed as the secretary of the commission in place of Hazeu in 1910, Rinkes wrote his account of it:

[T]he government has taken the initiative to elevate the population in a systematic manner, and it is to become clear from the application and appreciation of the principles that will be developed by the native population itself whether it wants to continue along this road or not. It is in the interests of its existence as a nation (*natie*) that its development is led along the same path that almost all other nations follow towards progress. A first effort has been made, but it is obviously the task of the more developed persons among the

¹⁵² *Wereldbibliotheek* was established under the name Society for Good and Cheap Reading (*Maatschappij voor Goede en Goedkoope Lectuur*). It was the private literary publisher founded in 1905 by Leo Simons. Although in the Netherlands publishing literature was not considered as a profitable publishing business, *Wereldbibliotheek* published literary classics and translations. Many famous authors from the Dutch and the world literature were introduced such as Couperus, Dante, Freud, Goethe, Multatuli, Schopenhauer, Spinoza, Dickens and Darwin. It published about 3,500 titles. Similar private literary publishers were *Reclams Universal-Bibliothek* in Leipzig (founded in 1867) and Everyman's Library in London (founded in 1906). The publisher's name “*Wereld*”bibliotheek suggests that the Dutch had the idea of “world literature,” which has been the world of translation. On the discussion of world literature, Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

¹⁵³ “*Volkslectuur*,” *Regeerings-Almanak*, 1914, p. 273.

native population itself to show their fellow countrymen the way and to offer them the proper tools to find the proper paths towards progress.¹⁵⁴

In 1917 the Commission for Popular Literature was reorganized under the Department of Education and Religious Affairs (*Departement van Onderwijs en Eeredienst*) with Rinkes as its chairman, from 1917 to 1927, and was given its Malay name, Balai Poestaka. Here, too, Rinkes used the position and the institution to put his ideas into practice.

Balai Poestaka consisted of eight sections: Editorial, Translation, Press Bureau, Printing Shop, Book Trade, Book Shop, Accounts, and People's Reading Room (*Volksbiblitheeken* or *Taman Poestaka*). The editorial section (*Afdeeling Redactie*) dealt with manuscripts of all types including European texts as well as those sent to Balai Poestaka for publication by private persons. The staff would make suggestions on the manuscripts and then send them over to a European chief, who would make the final decision on whether or not to publish the compositions. The editorial staff also was responsible for the two (later three) Balai Poestaka periodicals.

Balai Poestaka's main function was to provide "useful" reading materials for the public, and to promote "respectable" literature.¹⁵⁵ The Dutch had thought that they could in this way counter the influence of "wild" (independent) publications by flooding schools and public libraries with literature that would not inflame public political opinion. As Rinkes frankly wrote, Balai Poestaka was designed to cater to those who were products of Western-style schooling, because it would be detrimental to the government "if the man who knows how to read obtains dangerous reading

¹⁵⁴ D. A. Rinkes. *Nota over de Volkslectuur* (Batavia: Volkslectuur, 1911), pp. 3-4. The similar comment can be seen in Hidding, "The Bureau for Popular Literature," p. 187.

¹⁵⁵ Nidhi Aeusrivongse's pioneering work on Indonesian novels analyzes Balai Poestaka's novels and authors most systematically. Nidhi Aeusrivongse, "Fiction as History: A Study of Pre-war Indonesian Novels and Novelists (1920-1942)," (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1976).

materials from book traders who are not honest and from people who intend to cause chaos.”¹⁵⁶

All manuscripts were thus subject to heavy editing, naturally not excluding censorship of politically sensitive content, in order to be more “suitable” for the indigenous society.¹⁵⁷ The category of “useful” books included handbooks for practical knowledge; manuals for farming, gardening, book-keeping, guidebooks for electricians, painters, and nurses among others; books on hygiene and popular medicine, history and geography, popular almanacs, educational periodicals, and so on.¹⁵⁸ Balai Poestaka also encouraged the production of original literature in the vernacular languages. A good number of original novels were written by indigenous authors, but were published only after undergoing strict editing, Balai Poestaka editors found them “generally with a strong bias and not free from sensationalism.”¹⁵⁹

Three examples show what Balai Poestaka considered to be improper content. One ended with a major modification of the final published work, and the other two involved Balai Poestaka’s rejection for publication. The first case is *Salah Asoehan*, a novel by indigenous writer Abdoel Moeis. It was written in the middle of the 1920s and was one of the earliest Balai Poestaka’s original Malay novels. The plot features a Eurasian woman who marries an educated indigenous man and finds both of them caught in a social limbo, unable to fit in either group. In the original manuscript, Corrie, the Eurasian, is described as a promiscuous woman is ultimately slain by one of her lovers. Balai Poestaka required Moeis to modify these elements to make her die

¹⁵⁶ *Mededeelingen der Regeering omtrent enkele onderwerpen van algemeen belang*. (Weltevreden, Febr. 1926). See also D. A. Rinkes, “Volkslectuur,” in *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*. Tweede druk, (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1921), pp. 610-612.

¹⁵⁷ Setiadi, “Kolonialisme dan Budaya, Balai Pustaka di Hindia Belanda,” pp. 23-41.

¹⁵⁸ W. H. van Helsdingen and H. Hoogenberk (eds.), *Mission Interrupted: The Dutch in the East Indies and Their Work in the XXth Century* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1945), p. 86.

¹⁵⁹ Van Helsdingen and Hoogenberk, *Mission Interrupted*, p. 86.

of cholera instead. The modified novel was published in 1928, and became one of the “classics” in Indonesian literature.

The two cases of manuscript rejection by Balai Poestaka took place in the late 1930s. One case involved Soewarsih Djojopoespito’s autobiographical novel *Buiten het Gareel* (Outside the Harness), rejected in 1939 officially on account of the manuscript’s sub-standard Sundanese language, more likely due to its overt political content. Literary scholar C. W. Watson notes that the novel “offers personal testimony of the atmosphere and events of the times,” including an account of Soekarno, leader of the Indonesian nationalist movement, who is described as being “under constant scrutiny by the Dutch PID [*Politiek Inlichtingendienst*, Political Information Service], the intelligence bureau, and, during the period covered by the book . . . [is ultimately] arrested and exiled.”¹⁶⁰ Following Balai Poestaka’s refusal to publish Djojopoespito’s manuscript, a Dutch publisher W. de Haan in Utrecht decided to publish the novel in Dutch in 1940, with a new subtitle “*Indonesische roman*.” The other case of Balai Poestaka’s denial to publish involved the novel *Belenggu* by Armijn Pané, also an indigenous writer, which was refused on “moral” grounds because the content was considered too sexually explicit. Subsequently published by Poestaka Rakjat in Batavia in 1940,¹⁶¹ *Belunggu* became one of the canonical texts in Indonesian literature.

¹⁶⁰ C. W. Watson, “Feminism and the Indonesian Nationalist Movement: A Reading of Soewarsih Djojopoespito’s Novel *Buiten het Gareel*,” Sari 27 (2009), pp. 125-142. On the origin, development and activity of PID, see Takashi Shiraishi, “A New Regime of Order: The Origin of Modern Surveillance Politics in Indonesia,” in James T. Siegel and Audrey Kahin (eds.), *Southeast Asia over Three Generations: Essays Presented to Benedict R.O’G. Anderson* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 2003), pp. 47-74; Harry A. Poeze, “Political Intelligence in the Netherlands Indies,” in Robert Cribb (ed.), *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and Economic Foundation of the Netherlands Indies 1880-1942* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994), pp. 229-245. For a comprehensive history of police in the Indies, see Marieke Bloembergen, *De Geschiedenis van de Politie in Nederlands-Indië: Uit zorg en angst* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2009).

¹⁶¹ Teeuw, “Impact of Balai Pustaka on Modern Indonesian Literature.”

Translation was also encouraged by Balai Poestaka, especially that of European literary classics from Dutch or other Western languages. The rationale was that European literature represented the pinnacle of human civilization and could guide educated indigenous people to proceed onto the path of “progress” and become more like Europeans.¹⁶² A great number of Dutch and other Western classics were translated or adapted, for example the works of Jonathan Swift, Leo Tolstoy, Charles Dickens, Alexandre Dumas (father), William Shakespeare, and the likes. These translations were said to be more popular than original works by indigenous authors, even though the Malay language used by Balai Poestaka was quite removed from the ordinary speech (which was used in independent publications).

Balai Poestaka, however, was aware that it could not “eliminate all reading that might endanger the authority of the government and the security of the state” by censoring measures alone. So it sold its books below the market price and established the People’s Libraries (*Volksbibliotheken*) to ensure a kind of oligopolistic control over the book market. In other words, it tried to stamp out undesirable private publishers in the market with its pricing policy and by making its books available through thousands of lending libraries. The People’s Libraries or reading rooms were established in many Second Class Schools all over the country, mainly for administrative convenience; and their number increased from 768 in 1917 to 2,171 in 1925 to over 3,000 at the end of the Dutch era. The self-claimed success of Balai Poestaka in inundating the book market can also be seen in the figures on books checked out from such reading rooms under its administration. In 1925 the total circulation frequency of books in the reading rooms was 1,924,447, and by the end of the Dutch era the figure was approximately 2,100,000. The number of readers who

¹⁶² Rinkes, “Volkslectuur,” in *Gedenkboek voor Nederlandsch-Indië ter gelegenheid van het Regeeringsjubileum van H.M. de Koningin 1898-1923* (Batavia, Weltevreden, Leiden: G. Kolff & Co., 1923), p. 184.

used the reading rooms also increased from 241,864 persons in 1925 to 327,150 in 1940.¹⁶³ As one can see from the number of people's reading rooms run by Balai Poestaka from the Table below (Table 3-1: The Development of Balai Poestaka), its activities were mainly confined to Java, leaving the so-called Outer Islands were relatively overlooked in this strategy. Its distributing agents however were impressively wide, encompassing cities and small towns all over the Netherlands Indies.

Table 3-1: The Development of Balai Poestaka, 1917-1940												
	1917	1919	1921	1923	1925	1927	1929	1931	1934	1936	1938	1940
Lending Books*	406,700	751,429	1,116,365	1,282,397	1,924,477	2,281,852	2,591,211	2,907,291	2,216,809	2,014,292	2,003,078	2,133,290
Readers*	---	---	---	195,850	241,864	279,569	325,646	381,795	338,232	318,533	323,880	327,150
Reading Rooms	768	1,388	1,618	1,842	2,171	2,340	2,479	2,623	2,402	2,336	2,335	2,341
Java	563	712	761	572	1,031	1,140	1,219	1,326	1,255	1,216	1,212	1,214
Sunda	205	229	239	259	348	407	490	447	424	405	406	410
Madura	---	76	76	86	93	105	114	115	96	91	92	91
Melayu**	---	371	542	625	699	688	706	745	627	624	625	626
Library***	327	390	442	449	383	395	448	478	471	471	475	476
<p>This table is made from Balai Pustaka, <i>Balai Pustaka Sewadjaranja 1908-1942</i> (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1948).</p> <p>* These are the total number of lending books and readers, respectively.</p> <p>** Melayu means Sumatra area.</p> <p>*** These were popular libraries, whose books had been provided by Balai Poestaka.</p>												

On the surface, Balai Poestaka's constructive censorship appears to have worked well. Many studies of Indonesian literary history have praised Balai Poestaka for its achievement in promoting works by indigenous writers, and the institution was credited as the cradle of modern Indonesian literature.¹⁶⁴ Some have noted that Balai

¹⁶³ See Table "The Development of Balai Poestaka." For an excellent argument on Balai Poestaka's hegemony and discourse formation, see Setiadi, "Kolonialisme dan Budaya."

¹⁶⁴ See Pramoedya, "Balai Pustaka harum namanja didunia internasional-dahulu"; Teeuw, "The Impact of Balai Pustaka on Modern Indonesian Literature." Chapter 3 of this dissertation will describe the political mission and development of Balai Poestaka.

Poestaka could enjoy a hegemonic status over print culture because as a government institution it could dominate the production and distribution of literary works.¹⁶⁵ More importantly, according to A. Teeuw, who was long considered the established authority on modern Indonesian literature, as a channel for the first generation of “modern” indigenous writers, Balai Poestaka could be described as “the vehicle of innovation and modernization,” a medium for the indigenous reader to “take himself outside his village” in both conceptual and spiritual sense.¹⁶⁶ Thus, as Teeuw puts it, Balai Poestaka successfully asserted domination over the publishing market, especially the market for popular genre “romantic adventure stories.”¹⁶⁷ In reality, however, and quite contrary to this claim, Chinese-Malay books dominated the popular literature market, far outnumbering Balai Poestaka’s publications and overwhelming the latter in terms of their overall impact.¹⁶⁸

Balai Poestaka’s Press Monitoring

Since Balai Poestaka was to deal with all kind of printed matters, it was no surprise that in the original plan submitted by the First Government Secretary on September 14, 1917, the name “Office for Press Affairs and People’s Reading” was suggested for the bureau that was to be established. After two weeks of discussion, however, the phrase “Press Affairs” was eliminated and the name was changed to

¹⁶⁵ See Maier, “Forms of Censorship in the Dutch Indies”; Setiadi, “Kolonialisme dan Budaya, Balai Pustaka di Hindia Belanda”; Jedamski, “Balai Pustaka.”

¹⁶⁶ Teeuw, “The Impact of Balai Pustaka on Modern Indonesian Literature,” p. 115.

¹⁶⁷ Teeuw, “The Impact of Balai Pustaka on Modern Indonesian Literature,” p. 116. For the hegemonic influence of Balai Poestaka, see Teeuw, *Modern Indonesian Literature*; Aeusrivongse, “Fiction as History”; Setiadi, “Kolonialisme dan Budaya, Balai Pustaka di Hindia Belanda”; Jedamski, “Balai Pustaka.”

¹⁶⁸ The marginalization of Chinese-Malay literature only happened after Indonesia gained its independence. On the discussion of marginalization of Chinese-Malay literature, see Nio Joe Lan, *Sastra Indonesia-Tionghoa* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1962); John B. Kwee, “Chinese Malay Literature of the Peranakan Chinese in Indonesia 1880-1942,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Auckland, 1978); Salmon, *Literature in Malay by the Chinese in Indonesia*; Maier, “Forms of Censorship in the Dutch Indies”; Elizabeth Chandra, “National Fictions: Chinese-Malay Literature and the Politics of Forgetting” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2006).

“Bureau for Popular Literature” (*Bureau voor Volkslectuur*). This change happened because Dutch officials were worried that the name Press Affairs would provoke a backlash from the indigenous society.¹⁶⁹ Despite the change, however, it is clear that from the beginning Balai Poestaka was designed to deal with press affairs as its most important function. Balai Poestaka took over from the Office for Native Affairs the charge of summarizing the vernacular press and the Press Bureau section was created within Balai Poestaka. With these developments, a new periodical called *Overzicht van de Inlandsche Pers (IPO)* came into being in 1917 to replace the press survey of the *Koloniaal Tijdschrift*.¹⁷⁰

Balai Poestaka also produced other periodicals, mainly for popular consumption. The weekly Malay journal *Sri Poestaka* features popular science from 1918; others were the literary weekly *Pandji Poestaka* (1923) in Malay, the Javanese weekly *Kedjawen* (1926), and the Sundanese weekly *Parahiangan* (1928). Among these periodicals, *Pandji Poestaka* became widely popular, according to Rinkes, with an initial circulation of about 3,000 copies per issue, which later climbed to 7,000. Rinkes was proud of its “enormous success,” pointing out that *Pandji Poestaka* had demonstrated a promising means of counter-propaganda and a potential counterweight to such “tendentious” newspapers as *Api* and *Sin Po*.¹⁷¹

Unlike these periodicals however, *IPO* carried a press summary in Dutch for Dutch officials. There were two kinds of press survey in the Dutch era; one was the *IPO* that became public from 1921 onwards, and the other was the secret press survey,

¹⁶⁹ Vb. 22 Dec. 1917, no. 45.

¹⁷⁰ In regard *IPO* as a kind of periodical as well as a colonial document, for it was published regularly and had quite steady reading audience among mainly Dutch colonial officers.

¹⁷¹ Hoofdamtenaar voor de Volkslectuur en aanverwante aangelegenheden (D. A. Rinkes) aan Gouverneur-generaal (Fock), 26 Juni 1925, in Mr. 1647/25. It is questionable if 3,000 copies of *Pandji Poestaka* in a 60,000,000 population show an “enormous success” as Rinkes claimed. The point here is not how many copies of *Pandji Poestaka* were sold, but rather the journal had certain influences on the small reading public in the 1920s. *Api* was succeeded *Sinar Hindia*, a PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) organ, and *Sin Po* was a leading and pro-China Chinese-Malay newspaper in colonial days.

which circulated within a very small circle of high ranking officials. *IPO* was published weekly from 1918 until 1940. Between 1918 and 1920 its official name was *Overzicht van de Inlandsche Pers* (Survey of Indigenous Press), and it kept the same format as the one made by the Office for Native Affairs. From 1921 the title change to *Overzicht van de Inlandsche en Maleisch-Chineesche Pers* (Survey of Indigenous and Chinese-Malay Press), and the form changed from a mail report to a book form. From this point on *IPO* stopped being “secret” any longer and became available to the general public, which was able to “subscribe to it.”¹⁷² Each issue of *IPO* contained usually 40 to 60 pages in the 1920s.

Because *IPO* became a compulsory reading for Dutch officials, it had a wider audience than normal colonial documents, which circulated in a rather limited orbit. But this did not mean that Dutch officials were incapable of reading the vernacular press, because most of them had been trained in Indology and passed examinations on the Malay language. *IPO* was for busy administrators who could read Malay, but did not have the time or habit to read dozens of Malay publications every day. They relied on *IPO* in order to quickly and consistently grasp of what was going on in the Indies.

Generally speaking, periodicals carried important and interesting articles that attracted the general reader, as did *IPO*. The way in which *IPO* carried articles, however, was somewhat different due to its nature as a colonial document. It was supposed to detect potential troublemakers and trouble spots that might endanger the public order and stability of the Indies. Native periodicals of this kind in the 1920s were associated with SI and Communist Party of Indonesia (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, PKI), which constituted a major threat to the Indies government. Periodicals such as *Neratja* (Wetreveden, radical SI), *Sinar-Hindia* (Semarang, Communist), *Oetoesan-Hindia* (Soerabaja, radical SI) were to be closely monitored.

¹⁷² Brondgeest, *Bureau voor de Volkslectuur*, p. 18.

Because of the translations provided by *IPO*, it was easy to follow and comprehend the characteristics of each of these leading periodicals. By contrast while included in *IPO*'s listing of the vernacular press, Chinese-Malay newspapers were rarely reviewed in the 1920s, and no Chinese language periodicals were even mentioned in *IPO* outside of the in the occasionally prepared vernacular press listing.

Table 3-2: The Numbers of Malay Periodicals listed in *IPO* from 1918 to 1929

	Newspapers		Magazines		Chinese	
	Java	O.I.	Java	O.I.	Java	O.I.
1918	33	18	--	--	6	2
1919	34	19	--	--	--	--
Jan. 1920	31	24	--	--	6	2
Nov. 1920	34	22	--	--	6	2
Mar. 1922	28	9	11	11	10	4
Aug. 1922	25	11	16	16	13	4
Jan. 1923	28	16	28	20	12	4
Jul. 1923	27	19	31	24	11	4
Oct. 1923	26	20	26	24	12	4
Mar. 1924	25	18	30	33	14	5
Jul. 1924	27	20	22	28	13	4
Oct. 1924	26	21	24	29	14	5
Jan. 1925	28	21	32	31	16	6
Apr. 1925	33	20	40	36	17	7
Aug. 1925	36	21	31	37	18	9
Des. 1925	38	23	28	38	20	9
Jun. 1926	36	25	24	37	21	10
Sept. 1926	30	23	25	30	20	7
Mar. 1927	26	20	27	27	20	12
Apr. 1928	33	27	28	20	26	14
Sept. 1929	46	33	45	22	27	11

[Source: *IPO*, 1918-1929, my computation]

The distinction between newspapers and periodicals are based on the original category in *IPO* called “*nieuwsbladen*” (newspapers) and “*inlandsche periodieken*” (indigenous periodicals). I have also included in the category “Malay” all periodicals published in the Malay language or in combination with other languages.

The press review in *IPO* was organized not by general topic, but by summaries of major stories from representative native newspapers and periodicals. The categories were originally based on geographical areas such as Java and the Outer Islands, with sub-categories based on either language (Malay and Javanese) or religious association (Islam and Christianity). If one wanted to know what was happening in Sumatra, for example, all one had to do was to turn to the section on periodicals from the Outer Islands, which included Sumatra. Following the news of specific issues or organizations, however, was a more painstaking process. Most articles in *IPO* were translated directly from the indigenous press into Dutch, and articles on similar topics from different sources in the vernacular press often appeared in the same issue of *IPO*. If one needed to monitor what, for instance, SI was doing in July 1920 one needed to search each *IPO* issue carefully to find summaries from those newspapers that were the organs of the organization in question; by following these papers, one could accumulate desired information on the organization. Needless to say, government officials needed to read *IPO* on a regular basis.¹⁷³

IPO and *persdelict* reinforced each other to monitor violation of press law, as well as to broadcast *persdelict* charges and proceedings. After 1914, *persdelict* was frequently enforced against radical nationalists and journalists, and sometimes even against Dutch journalists when the colonial government thought it was necessary to take action against them.¹⁷⁴ *IPO* carried many articles on these cases. By reading *IPO* Dutch administrative officials, judges, and police officers came to know who had

¹⁷³ Because of this nature of *IPO*, it has become an indispensable source for post-colonial scholars to trace thoughts and deeds of political activism in colonial Indonesia. It also partially explains the reason why there are few fine studies on political history in the 1930s when *IPO* was virtually not available any longer due to colonial policy change that took place in the late 1920s as Chapter 4 of this dissertation argues.

¹⁷⁴ Chapter 4 of this dissertation analyzes *persdelict* cases in which *IPO* played a role. For the case *persdelict* issued against Dutch journalist in the 1910s, see Jaap de Moor, "De affaire-Asymptoot en de haatzaai-artikelen," in Herman Diederiks and Chris Quispel (eds.), *Onderscheid en minderheid: Sociaal-historische opstellen over discriminatie en vooroordeel* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1987), pp. 285-302.

violated *persdelict* and why. But since they also knew who was writing in the native press and what they were writing about even if they could not read the vernacular press, it is likely that reading *IPO* helped them decide when to invoke *persdelict*.

A secret press summary was also prepared to compensate for *IPO*'s shortcomings. Balai Poestaka first starting publishing a monthly secret press summary, called "General Summary of the Indigenous Press" (*Algemeen Overzicht van de Inlandsche pers*, hereafter *Algemeen*) in March 1918, only for circulation among the Governor-General and higher government officials. *Algemeen* carried a more concise summary than *IPO*. Before *Algemeen* began publication, Rinkes himself, acting in his capacity as chairman of Balai Poestaka, compiled the survey of indigenous press, which provided information on who was engaged in which newspapers.¹⁷⁵ Basically, *Algemeen* summarized only two topics, a general summary of periodicals and one of general affairs, in this order. Information on indigenous (not Chinese) periodicals, editors, and publishers was carried by *Algemeen*. Articles were written based on the information gathered in *IPO*, and the two journals complemented each other. Thus, if one wanted to know about a newly published periodical in detail for instance, *Algemeen* would direct the reader to related issues of and pages in *IPO*.

Discussion of press surveys conducted by the colonial government would not be complete without mentioning those for the Chinese press. Two types of such surveys existed in the Indies – secret and standard (public) press surveys on the Chinese press. The former was "General Review of Chinese and Chinese-Malay Press" (*Beschouwingen over de Chineesche en de Maleisch-Chineesche Pers*, hereafter *Beschouwingen*), and the latter was "Survey of Chinese-Malay and Chinese

¹⁷⁵ "Beschouwingen over de inlandse pers gedurende de laatste maanden van 1917 van het bureau van de hoofd-ambtenaar voor de volkslectuur en aanverwante aangelegenheden," 1 Jan. 1918 in Vb. 17 Mei 1918 no. 73, or in R. C. Kwantes (ed.), *De Ontwikkeling van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlandsch-Indië (Bronnenpublicatie). Eerste stuk 1917 - medio 1923*, (Groningen: H. D. Tjeenk Willink, 1975), pp. 11-18.

Press” (*Overzichten van de Maleisch-Chineesche en Chineesche Pers*, hereafter *MCC*).

The secret press surveys, *Algemeen* and *Beschouwingen* were only published in limited numbers. From December 1923 until September 1925, only twenty-two copies of *Algemeen* were sent to the General Secretaries of the Department of the Colonies and Dr. C. Snouck Hurgronje, then Professor and Adviser for Native and Arab Affairs.¹⁷⁶ Later, in the beginning of 1926, the circulation of secret press surveys became even more restricted. Three of each copy of *IPO* and *MCC* were sent to the Library of the Department of the Colonies, two copies of *Beschouwingen* to the Minister for the Colonies, and one of each copy of *Algemeen* to the Minister and Professor Hurgronje.¹⁷⁷

Thus four kinds of press survey actually existed. These press surveys helped Dutch colonial officials – particularly ones who were new to the Indies colony – in different ways to understand the indigenous society, listen to their voices, detect the economic pulse of the Indies, measure its political temperature, and make decisions accordingly. “Unruly” voices needed to be detected early and stamped out for the sake of law and order. In this sense, the surveys also helped the colonial officials to discipline disobedient subjects.

The “Chinese Question”

As I have mentioned above, besides *IPO* another kind of press survey existed in the Indies to target periodicals by the Chinese. The Chinese played a major role in developing the vernacular press and influential media in the twentieth century, even

¹⁷⁶ De Hoofdamtenaar voor de Volkslectuur en aanverwante aangelegenheden (Rinkes) aan Gouverneur-generaal (Fock), Oct. 26, 1925, in Mr. 1019x/25.

¹⁷⁷ wd. 1e Gouvernements-Secretaris (W. G. Strobant) aan den Hoofdamtenaar voor de Volkslectuur en aanverwante aangelegenheden (Afs. verleend a/d Adv. Chin. Zaken en Bureau G. te Batavia), Feb. 25, 1926, in Mr. 229x/26.

though they made up only a small percentage of the overall Indies population. The remark Rinkes made in 1925 about “tendentious” vernacular newspapers was in part directed at *Sin Po* and other Indies Chinese publications,¹⁷⁸ demonstrating the social influence of Chinese-Malay press. Historically Indies Chinese had been publishing newspapers in Malay since the 1880s.¹⁷⁹ Thanks to the number of private Chinese publishers and more relaxed government scrutiny, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the Chinese had dominated the publishing market in the Malay language. Much like other pioneering media, early Chinese-Malay newspapers also started out as a medium for commercial news, before expanding to coverage of social and legal matters, as well as political affairs.

A major social function of Chinese-Malay press was to communicate Chinese concerns and interests to the authorities. It carried complaints regarding the travel restrictions (*passtelsel*) and zoning system (*wijkenstelsel*) designed specifically for the Chinese,¹⁸⁰ the separate taxation rate, the lack of government services such as schools for the Chinese, mistreatment by government officials, and the fact that in civil and criminal cases they were subjected to the same legal system as the indigenous population. The press had played a significant role in getting the government’s attention since the end of the nineteenth century when the so-called “Chinese question” was formulated.¹⁸¹ To understand the social significance of the Chinese-Malay press, it is necessary to examine the “Chinese question,” which also explains how the colonial state monitored the Chinese press.

¹⁷⁸ Hoofdbambtenaar voor de Volkslectuur en aanverwante aangelegenheden (D. A. Rinkes) aan Gouverneur-generaal (Fock), Jun 26, 1925, in Mr. 1647/25.

¹⁷⁹ Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, *passim*.

¹⁸⁰ Soon after the 1740 massacre of Chinese in Batavia, the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, VOC) regime installed these travel restrictions and zoning systems for the Chinese on grounds of “security.”

¹⁸¹ See P. H. Fromberg, *Mr. P. H. Fromberg’s Verspreide geschriften* (Leiden: Leidsche Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1926).

The “Chinese question” pertains to the way the Indies government perceived the Chinese. It refers to a set of issues related to the position of the Chinese in the Indies, similar to those faced by minority groups in other countries. It consists of discussions and debates on the relationship between the Chinese and non-Chinese in the Indies, the legal restrictions placed upon the Chinese, and their emancipation and assimilation. The Dutch experts on the Chinese in the Indies played an important role in these discussions, because they understood the Chinese situation well. They were aware of the Chinese grievances stemming from their relative disadvantaged position compared with the Dutch and, in some regards, the natives. In books or journal articles, these experts described in detail the socio-cultural life in the Indies Chinese, suggesting that the majority of the Chinese were already to a great extent acculturated in the local culture. But despite their writings, the stereotypes of Indies Chinese remained in the society – they had pigtails, wore Chinese outfit, resided in designated zones in the city, and were predominantly merchants.¹⁸² These stereotypes derived from the Dutch policy towards the Chinese population since the seventeenth century, which consisted of the travel restrictions and zoning system. Furthermore, a new social reality reinforced the image of the Chinese as a separate population in the Indies. Since the 1880s the Dutch saw a flood of new Chinese immigrants speaking various dialects of Chinese, with which most Dutch officials were not familiar. This influx of “Chinese” speaking people overshadowed the fact that Indies Chinese spoke local languages and Malay. So the colonial experts in effect found themselves dealing with two different kinds of Chinese, each requiring different approaches.

For the government the nineteenth century colonial government, the “Chinese question” had been a minor problem, but by the turn of the century it became a more

¹⁸² Ironically, against their will, their writings contributed to the preservation of Chinese idiosyncrasies. It happened because in order to distinguish the Indies Chinese from those of China, the writings tended to dwell on the latter, which stuck in the reader’s mind.

significant issue affecting the indigenous population. At that point, two distinct aspects of the “Chinese question” emerged: How to “protect” the indigenous people from exploitations by the Chinese, on the one hand, and, on the other, on how to deal with demands from and concessions to the Chinese residents of the Indies.

It is no secret that the Indies government saw the Chinese as the main cause of the diminishing welfare among the natives. Many officials saw confronting the Chinese as part of the duty they had to protect the natives. The Chinese were often blamed for fraudulent trades with both Europeans and natives. They were seen as taking advantage of the native residents, especially in terms of the revenue farming system. The latter was a system whereby the government granted a private contractor (revenue farmer) the exclusive right to collect a certain tax in a specified area for a set number of years in return for a fixed rent, and the farmer kept for himself any amount which he collected over and above what he owed the government in rent.¹⁸³ The most notorious “Chinese exploitation” was the sale of opium. This was why in 1900 the opium farming was abolished and a government monopoly was instituted in its place. This was followed by the decision to extend the government monopoly of pawnshops throughout the Indies. The government also began its system of agricultural credit banks with the objective of furnishing cheaper credit to the indigenous farmers and rescuing them from the clutches of loan sharks, which often were Chinese. All these measures affected the livelihoods of the Chinese in the Indies.

On their part, the Chinese had their own grievances, the most important of which involved their legal status and the restrictions placed on travel and residents. The Ethical Policy gradually removed those grievances. On March 17, 1900, the Chinese Association (THHK) was established in Batavia. It marked the beginning of overseas Chinese nationalism as an organized movement in the Indies. It exemplified

¹⁸³ See Rush, *Opium to Java*.

the resinicization of the indigenized Chinese (*peranakan*) because THHK promoted Chinese-medium education as well as Confucianism.¹⁸⁴ In reaction to the development of THHK, as well as in compliance with *peranakan* Chinese demand, the government established the Dutch-Chinese Schools in 1908. The unpopular pass system was relaxed in 1904 by the granting of passes valid for a year instead of for a single journey, and in 1910 the right of free passage along the main highways without a permit was conceded. In 1911, the Indies government recognized Chinese consuls; and in a succession of orders between 1914 and 1916, it allowed the Chinese greater freedom of residence and movement. In 1919, the government abolished all restrictions regarding place of residences for the Chinese people in Java, and in 1926 extended the ruling to those in the Outer Islands. The Chinese were also admitted to advisory councils at the central and local levels. In sum, these concessions provided the Chinese with greater social freedom and a legal status closer to that of Europeans.

The Chinese population may not have posed any political threat to the Indies state, but the flood of new Chinese immigrants from the 1880s onward eventually created social problems in many places. It forced the Indies state to appoint Officials for Chinese Affairs (*Ambtenaren voor Chineesche Zaken*) under the Department of Justice in 1896. Its establishment on 1 October 1896 came two years earlier than the establishment of Bureau for Native Affairs, which was under the Department of Internal Affairs. This fact indicates how the Indies state was in fact also concerned about the Chinese population in its territory.

¹⁸⁴ The THHK schools opened throughout the Indies; 54 by 1908 and reaching 450 by 1934, some of which were only in name. Nio Joe Lan, *Riwajat 40 taon dari Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan Batavia, 1900-1939* (Batavia: Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan, 1940). As early as in the late 1910s, however, some THHK schools got only 50 % enrollment because the rich Chinese parents sent their children to Dutch-Chinese Schools (*Hollandsch-Chineesche School*, HCS) that was established in 1907. Mona Lohanda, *Growing Pains: The Chinese and the Dutch in Colonial Java, 1890-1942* (Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, 2002), p. 59.

Survey of Chinese Periodicals

Monitoring the Chinese press became an issue when Rinkes tried to implement the vernacular press monitoring system in the beginning of the 1910s. In fact, as I have described above, the first press survey report that Rinkes made in 1912 includes three Chinese-Malay newspapers out of twenty-two newspapers that he cited.¹⁸⁵ In its early years, *IPO* also carried brief summaries of Chinese-Malay press in each issue. Rinkes must have understood that if he wished to accomplish comprehensive press monitoring, he needed to include major Chinese-Malay press. Nevertheless, *IPO*'s main focus needed to remain on the indigenous press and the task of monitoring the Chinese vernacular press fell to another institution.

The task of monitoring Chinese-Malay and Chinese periodicals had been carried out by the Bureau for Chinese Affairs (*Dienst der Chineesche Zaken*), which was established in 1916 to replace the Officials for Chinese Affairs. One contemporary scholar, J. F. H. Later, contended in 1915 that Chinese-Malay and indigenous press had a different orientation because the former focused on Chinese affairs in the Indies and political developments in China.¹⁸⁶ This view was prevalent in the middle of the 1910s; hence the Indies state decided to monitor Chinese-Malay press independently.

Since their appointment in 1896, the Officials for Chinese Affairs had been under Department of Justice (*Departement van Justice*), which was responsible for dealing with immigrants. During a reorganization of the Indies administrations that occurred in 1913, Officials for Chinese Affairs were positioned under the guidance of

¹⁸⁵ Three Chinese-Malay newspapers were *Perniagaan* (Batavia), *Bintang Soerabaja* (Soerabaja), and *Tjahja Timor* (Malang).

¹⁸⁶ J. F. H. Later, "De Maleise Pers," *De Indische Gids*, 37-2 (1915), pp. 1264-1272. Later was aware that there were two kinds of Chinese in the Indies; one group was driven by Chinese nationalism and became politically active, while the other called "*Peranakan*" was conservative and politically remained calm. He noticed the reason of successful Chinese-Malay newspapers lay in their advertisement and subscription programs, which were weak points that indigenous press had.

the Department of Internal Affairs (*Departement van Binnenlandsch Bestuur*) instead of Department of Justice. This change suggested that the “Chinese question” had become a domestic issue that affected inter-racial relationships. In the same year, B. A. J. van Wettum, the Advisor for Japanese and Chinese Affairs, suggested in his letter to Governor-General Idenburg that control of the press should be regulated in accordance with the Indian Press Act 1910.¹⁸⁷ No extra powers were granted to the administration or the Advisor for Chinese Affairs; in spite of this, the Officials for Chinese Affairs decided to issue a summary of the Chinese press in Dutch language under the guidance of J. L. J. F. Ezerman, then the Advisor for Chinese Affairs (*Adviseur voor Chineesche Zaken*).

The very first series of mail reports on Chinese periodicals were “Press Reports/Press Surveys” (*Persrapporten/Persoverzichten*) of February, March, and April 1915, which were submitted to the Director of Home Affairs (*Directeur van Binnenlandsch Bestuur*), who monitored the thirteen leading Chinese newspapers in both Malay and Chinese languages. The thirteen Chinese papers were as follows: *Sin Po*, *Perniagaan*, *Han Po* (Batavia), *Warna Warta*, *Djawa-Tengah* (Semarang), *Pelita* (Jogjakarta), *Ho Po* (Soerabaja), *Tiong Hoa Wi Wien Po* (Buitenzorg), *Andalas* (Medan), *Soeara Hindia* (Sibolga), *Sinar Sumatra*, *Bintang Tiong Hoa*, *Hoa Po* (Padang).¹⁸⁸ In the 1916 the name, “Press Reports/Press Surveys” was changed to the aforementioned *Beschouwingen*. These secret reports were submitted every month to high government officials such as Governor-General and Prosecutor General.

¹⁸⁷ Adviseur voor Japanse en Chinese Zaken (B. A. J. van Wettum) aan Gouverneur-generaal (Idenburg), Aug. 10, 1913, in Van der Wal, *De opkomst van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlands-Indië*, pp. 312-313.

¹⁸⁸ Mr. 1030/1915. It is to be noted that in the 1910s Batavia, Semarang, and Padang were the centers of Chinese own periodicals, while later the centers were moved to Soerabaja and Medan, except Batavia.

The survey of the Chinese press was developed under the guidance of H. Mouw. Mouw was appointed as Advisor for Chinese Affairs on 19 May 1919 and retired as Head of the Bureau for Chinese Affairs (*Dienst der Chineesche Zaken*) in 1935.¹⁸⁹ For lower level Dutch officials, the “Survey of Chinese-Malay and Chinese Press” or *MCC* was first prepared and published in book-form in October 1917. This Dutch language report was issued monthly with an average of 40 pages until April 1927. From May 1927 it became a weekly of about 15 pages. It covered major Chinese and Chinese-Malay newspapers in the Indies, while focusing on the latter, because the number of circulation and audience was much larger than the former. The number of both Chinese and Chinese-Malay newspapers it covered increased from 39 in October 1921 to 50 in October 1923, and to 60 in December 1927.

The report itself was compiled by the Office for Chinese Affairs, but was published by Balai Poestaka, except in 1927 when it was published by 't Kasteel van Aemstel in Weltevreden. Unlike *IPO*, which had been confidential until 1921, *MCC* was made available to the public from the beginning, even if few people knew of its existence. The number of periodicals monitored in the report grew from thirteen in 1915 to more than fifty in the 1920s.¹⁹⁰

The number of newspapers and periodicals reviewed in *MCC* is different from that of *IPO*, which also claimed to be surveying Indies Chinese newspapers. In January 1923, *MCC* listed 48 newspapers as its sources, while *IPO* listed 16 or one-third of *MCC*'s coverage. In September 1929, *MCC* covered 59 newspapers, whereas *IPO* listed 38. It is obvious that there was a major difference in terms of the number

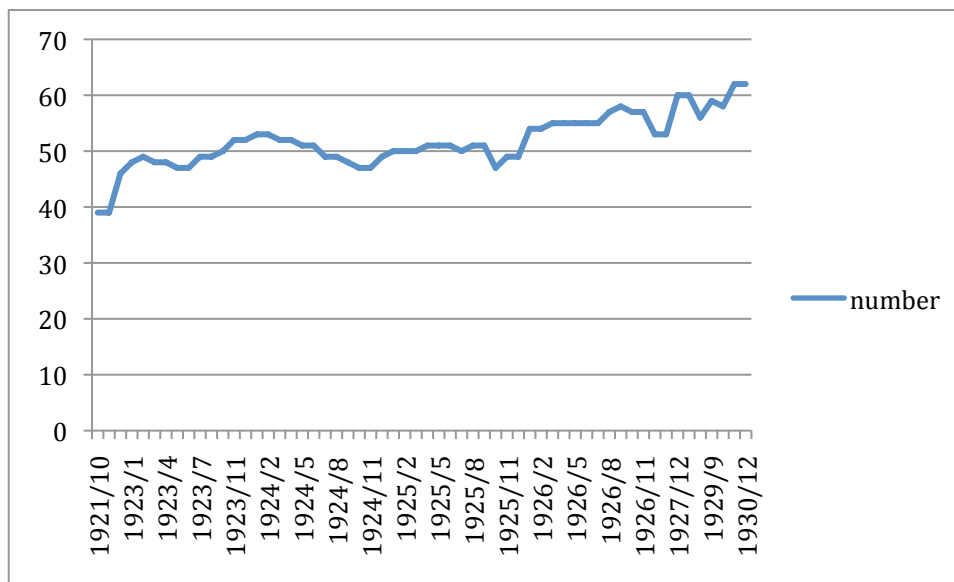
¹⁸⁹ Mouw's first appointment as Advisor for the Chinese affairs was in 1916, but he was demoted to officer in 1917 for a couple of years for unclear reasons.

¹⁹⁰ These figures are taken from Mr. 1030/15, and the lists of periodicals from various issues of the report (October 1921 - December 1930).

of vernacular publications that *MCC* and *IPO* covered. Although their focuses were different, some of the Chinese-Malay newspapers they covered actually overlapped.

Comparing *IPO* and *MCC* in terms of their coverage of Chinese newspapers reveals the characteristics of their surveys. The two government surveys differ not only in the number of newspapers each journal covered, but in a more complicated sense as well. Here for the sake of comparison, I take two different years – 1920 and 1927 – of press surveys of each journal. To show the distinction, I follow the original lists in both *IPO* and *MCC*.¹⁹¹

Table 3-3: The Number of Press Reviewed in *MCC* (1921.10-1930.12)



[Source: The list is from various *MCC* issues]

IPO in 1920 only covered eight Chinese-Malay newspapers. Its order does not suggest any significance, but it covered major Chinese-Malay press. The number of

¹⁹¹ These lists tell many stories, but I will stick to the comparison between *IPO* and *MCC* in order to show the uniqueness of the latter.

covered publishers then jumped to thirty-two in 1927, this time listed in alphabetical order. The list looks more organized, but the ways in which *IPO* summarized Chinese-Malay press provided almost nothing significant. It often did not carry any summary of Chinese-Malay press at all. In other words, it is safe to say that the list was made mainly as a matter of formality as part of the press survey.

However, from the standpoint of scholarship, the list reveals several intriguing facts, because it listed the names of chief editors at a particular time. For instance, a well-known journalist, Liem Koen Hian was the chief editor of *Sinar Sumatra* in Padang after 1921, and in 1923 moved to become the chief editor of *Pewart* *Seorabaia* in Soerabaja. But he quarreled with the editors, and then founded *Soeara Publiek* in 1925.¹⁹² In 1927 the city of Djombang, East Java, had four Chinese-Malay newspapers; the position of chief editor for three of them – namely *Bintang Pagi*, *Sinar Matahari*, and *Yoe Sen* – was held by Ong Khing In. Another newspaper called *Tjahaja Djombang* had Tan Sionk Gwan as its chief editor. Also in 1927 Tan Boen Kim, a journalist and popular novelist, held the position of chief editor of *Kiao Po* in Palembang.¹⁹³ But as I mentioned above, reading *IPO* did not provide any detailed information explicitly on these journalists. One had to follow the summaries made of the articles they had written in their respective newspapers in order to piece together a kind of profile of the journalists themselves.

¹⁹² Benedict Anderson, “Kata Pengantar,” in Tjamboek Berdoeri, *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara* (Jakarta: elkasa, 2004), pp. 15-16.

¹⁹³ When he was the chief editor of *Kiao Po*, he was charged with a complaint offence (*klachtdelict*). His defense statement is available as “Pleidooinja Hoofdredacteur *Kiao Po* dalem Klachtdelictnja Pada Burgemeester Palembang,” in Tan Boen Kim, *Tanboenkim’s Pleidooi: Pleidoenja Journalist-journalist, advocaat-advocaat en Procureur ternama, jang belaken diri sendiri atawa clientnja lantaran persdelict, klachtdelict dan laen-laen perkara delict, kadjahatan atawa crimineel, depan sidang pengadilan di Indonesia*. (Batavia: Firma Sun Boen, 193?), pp. 24-31.

Table 3-4: Chinese Vernacular Newspapers and Periodicals Covered by <i>IPO</i> , 1920 and 1927				
1920				
	Names	Language	Editors	Place
1	<i>Pewartar Soerabaja</i>	M	Kommer (<i>Indo</i>)	Soerabaja
2	<i>Sin Po</i>	M	Tjoe Bou San	Batavia
3	<i>Perniagaan</i>	M	Tio Tjin Boen	Batavia
4	<i>Djawa Tengah</i>	M	K. T. Kwee	Semarang
5	<i>Warta Warna</i>	M	Phoa Tjoen Hoat	Semarang
6	<i>Tjahaja Timoer</i>	M	W. A. Kailola	Malang
7	<i>Sinar Sumatra</i>	M	Liem Koen Hian	Padang
8	<i>Andalas</i>	M	Toejoeng	Medan
1927				
1	<i>Bintang Borneo</i>	M	Tio Ie Soei	Bandjarmasin
2	<i>Bintang Pagi</i>	M	Ong Khing In	Djombang
3	<i>Djawa Tengah</i>	M	Be Sik Tjong	Semarang
4	<i>Djawa Tengah Monthly</i>	M	Editors of Djawa Tengah	Semarang
5	<i>Doenia Baroe</i>	M	Pek Pang Ing	Medan
6	<i>Han Po</i>	M	Tan Thwan Khing	Palembang
7	<i>Hoakiao</i>	M	Kwee Hing Tjiat	Soerabaja
8	<i>Hoa Pit</i>	M	Lie Sian Siang	Padang
9	<i>Keng Hwa Po</i>	M	Tjia Djoe Tjiat	Menado
10	<i>Keng Po</i>	M	Tan Tjin Thay	Batavia
11	<i>Kiao Po</i>	M	Tan Boen Kim	Palembang
12	<i>Panorama</i>	M	Kwee Tek Hoay	Batavia
13	<i>Pelita Andalas</i>	M	J. Koning (<i>Indo</i>)	Medan
14	<i>Perdamean</i>	M	Liem Soen Hin	Padang
15	<i>Perniagaan</i>	M	Thio Tjin Boen	Batavia
16	<i>Pewartar Soerabaja</i>	M	Liem Kwie Giok	Soerabaja
17	<i>Radio</i>	M	Tjio Peng Hong	Padang
18	<i>Revolver</i>	M	Tan Liang Hoo	Palembang
19	<i>Sinar Matahari</i>	M	Ong Khing In	Djombang
20	<i>Sin Po</i>	M	Kwee Kek Beng	Batavia
21	<i>Sin Po (illustrated)</i>	M	Editors of Sin Po	Batavia
22	<i>Sin Jit Po</i>	M		Soerabaja
23	<i>Sinar Sumatra</i>	M	Jap Gim Sek	Padang
24	<i>Soeara Baroe</i>	M	Liem Hian Bing	Semarang
25	<i>Soeara Publiek</i>	M	Liem Koen Hian	Soerabaja
26	<i>Soemangat</i>	M	Ong Kiong Djoen	Semarang
27	<i>Tjahaja Djombang</i>	M	Tan Siok Gwan	Djombang

Table 3-4 (Continued)				
28	<i>Tjahaja Timoer</i>	M	Th. K. Kwee	Malang
29	<i>Tjin Po</i>	M	Tan Tek Bie	Medan
30	<i>Warna Warta</i>	M & E	Lauw Kong Hoey	Semarang
31	<i>Warna Warta weekly</i>	M	Liem Thain Joe	Semarang
32	<i>Yoe Sen</i>	M	Ong Khing In	Djombang
[M = Malay, E = English]				

For comparison, the examples from *MCC* are from October 1921 and 1927. The list from October 1921 has 39 newspapers. The list of covered periodicals indicates what the Office for Chinese Affairs was paying attention to. As the content of *MCC* shows below, it monitored press coverage on Chinese related domestic politics, education, economy, journalism, and complaints, as well as international affairs concerning political development in China. In order to pursue the last objective, *MCC* needed to cover newspapers and periodicals from Peking, Nanking, Shanghai, Canton, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Therefore, in 1921 sixteen out of thirty-nine papers and periodicals were from outside the Netherlands Indies. The number of “foreign” newspapers went down slightly to fourteen in 1927, while that of “domestic” vernacular ones increased to thirty-nine from twenty-three in 1921. This change reflects the fact that the volume and variety of vernacular press in the Indies increased. In other words, in the latter half of the 1920s, *MCC* spent more time poring over the growing number of domestic vernacular newspapers than foreign ones.

Table 3-5: List of the Surveyed Newspapers and Periodicals by <i>MCC</i> , 1921 and 1927		
1921		
No.	Name of periodicals	Place
1	<i>Andalas</i>	Medan
2	<i>Bintang Soerabaja</i>	Soerabaja
3	<i>Canton Times</i>	Canton
4	<i>Chiao Yu Kung Pao</i> (Dept. of Education)	Peking
5	<i>China and Malaysia</i>	Nanking

Table 3-5 (Continued)		
6	<i>Chung Hua Min Kuo Chung Fu Kung Pao</i> (South China Gazette)	Canton
7	<i>Chung Fu Kung Pao</i> (Chinese Gazette)	Peking
8	<i>Deli Morning Post</i>	Medan
9	<i>Djawa Tengah</i>	Semarang
10	<i>Fadjar</i>	Cheribon
11	<i>Great Light</i>	Hongkong
12	<i>Indo-China</i>	Makassar
13	<i>Keng Hoa Po</i>	Menado
14	<i>Kong Po</i>	Batavia
15	<i>Kong Siong Djiet Poo</i>	Batavia
16	<i>Macassar Free Press</i>	Macassar
17	<i>Monthly Magazine of Chinese Educational Association</i>	Medan
18	<i>Morning Post</i>	Peking
19	<i>Nam Jang Djit Pao</i>	Medan
20	<i>New Society</i>	Peking
21	<i>North China Herald</i>	Shanghai
22	<i>Nung Shang Kung Pao</i> (Dept. of Agriculture)	Peking
23	<i>Perniagaän</i>	Batavia
24	<i>Perobahan</i> (vroeger <i>Algemeen Advertentieblad</i>)	Padang
25	<i>Pewarta Soerabaja</i>	Soerabaja
26	<i>Se Fa Kung Pao</i> (Dept. of Justice)	Peking
27	<i>Shun Thien Shih Pao</i>	Peking
28	<i>Sinar Sumatra</i>	Padang
29	<i>Sin Kuo Min Press</i>	Singapore
30	<i>Sin Po</i>	Batavia
31	<i>Sin Po</i> (Chinese edition)	Batavia
32	<i>Sin Wan Pao</i>	Shanghai
33	<i>Soe Pien Djiet Po</i>	Soerabaja
34	<i>Straits Magazine</i>	Peking
35	<i>Sumatra Daily News</i>	Medan
36	<i>Thien Sung Yit Po</i>	Batavia
37	<i>Tjahaja Timoer</i>	Malang
38	<i>Tsun Wan Yat Po</i>	Hongkong
39	<i>Warna Warta</i>	Semarang
1927		
	Name of periodicals	Place
1	<i>Asia</i>	Semarang (M)
2	<i>Bintang Borneo</i>	Bandjarmasin (M)
3	<i>Chiao Yu Kung Pao</i> (Dept. of Education)	Peking (C)
4	<i>Chinese Educational Association</i>	Koetoeardjo (C)

Table 3-5 (Continued)		
5	<i>Chuan Min Yit Po</i>	Batavia (C)
6	<i>Chun Fun Kung Pao</i> (Chinese Gazette)	Peking (C)
7	<i>Chua Hwa Monthly</i>	Soerabaja (C and E)
8	<i>Djawa Tengah</i>	Semarang (M)
9	<i>Djawa Tengah</i> (monthly)	Semarang (M)
10	<i>Fikiran</i>	Menado (M)
11	<i>Great Light</i>	Hongkong (C)
12	<i>Han Po</i>	Palembang (M)
13	<i>Hoa Kiao</i> (bi-monthly)	Soerabaja (M)
14	<i>Hongkong Weekly Press</i>	Hongkong (E)
15	<i>Keng Po</i>	Batavia (M)
16	<i>Keng Hwa Po</i>	Menado (M)
17	<i>Kong Siong Djit Po</i>	Batavia (C)
18	<i>Kwong Wah Yit Poh</i>	Penang (C)
19	<i>Morning Post</i>	Peking (C)
20	<i>Nayang Daily News</i>	Medan (C)
21	<i>North China Herald</i>	Shanghai (E)
22	<i>Nung Shang Kung Pao</i> (Dept. of Agriculture)	Peking (C)
23	<i>Panorama</i> (weekly)	Batavia (M)
24	<i>Palita Andalas</i>	Medan (M)
25	<i>Perniagaan</i>	Batavia (M)
26	<i>Pewart Soerabaia</i>	Soerabaia (M)
27	<i>Radio</i>	Padang (M)
28	<i>Republican Daily News</i>	Shanghai (C)
29	<i>Sam Yu Weekly News</i>	Bagan Api2 (C)
30	<i>Sek Kang Siong Po</i>	Makassar (C)
31	<i>Se Fa Kung Pao</i> (Dept. of Justice)	Peking (C)
32	<i>Semarang Yit Po</i>	Semarang (C)
33	<i>Shun Pao</i>	Shanghai (C)
34	<i>Shun Tien Shih Pao</i>	Peking (C)
35	<i>Sinar Sumatra</i>	Padang (M)
36	<i>Sin Kuo Min Press</i>	Singapore (C)
37	<i>Sin Yit Po</i>	Soerabaia (M)
38	<i>Sin Po</i> (Malay edition)	Batavia (M)
39	<i>Sin Po</i> (Chinese edition)	Batavia (C)
40	<i>Sin Po</i> (Weekly edition)	Batavia (M)
41	<i>Soe Pin Sin Po</i>	Soerabaia (C)
42	<i>Soera Publiek</i>	Soerabaia (M)
43	<i>Shiong Tih Hui</i>	Buitenzorg (M)
44	<i>Sumatra Bin Poh</i>	Medan (C)
45	<i>Tay Kong Siang Po</i>	Soerabaia (C)
46	<i>Thien Sung Yit Po</i>	Batavia (C)
47	<i>Tiong Hwa Siang Po</i>	Bandoeng (M)

Table 3-5 (Continued)		
48	<i>Tiong Nam Djit Po</i>	Semarang (C)
49	<i>Tjahaja Timoer</i>	Malang (M)
50	<i>Tjin Po</i>	Medan (M)
51	<i>Tsun Wan Yat Po</i>	Hongkong (C)
52	<i>Warna Warta</i>	Semarang (M)
53	<i>Warna Warta</i> (weekly)	Semarang (M)
[C = Chinese, E= English, M= Malay]		

MCC provides a better-organized survey than *IPO*, which was essentially a summary of the vernacular press. While *IPO* only summarized individual newspapers, *MCC* prepared a table of contents for the newspapers covered. Although *MCC*'s order slightly changed over the period of time, its basic format in the first half of the 1920s was as follows: Domestic Politics, Foreign Affairs, Labor Movement, Education, Economy, Unions, Journalism, Complaints, and Varia (Miscellaneous). The format changed between January 1925 and December 1926, when it assumed the following order:: Domestic Politics, International Politics, Nationalism and Communism, Education, Economy, Unions, Journalism, and Varia. Between February 1927 and April 1927 the order changed again to become: Domestic Politics, International Politics, Chinese Movement, Anti-Western Action, Education, Economy, Unions, Journalism, Complaints, and Varia. After *MCC* turned from monthly to weekly, the classification became simpler: Domestic Politics, International Politics, Chinese Politics, Education, Unions, Journalism, and Complaints. The contents varied depending on the topic that *MCC* picked up for the week. Sometimes the heading "Complaints" was omitted, whereas in another issue it was "Anti-Western Action." The major institutional change of the colonial government in 1932 affected *MCC*, as well. Since January 4, 1932, weekly *MCC* became a 10-page booklet. At the outset, its content followed the same format as in the 1920s, but from issue No. 3 dated on January 18, 1932, it only had "Domestic Politics," "International Politics," and

“Chinese Movement.” Although the subjects that *MCC* covered were reduced, it kept the same number of pages.

Each heading has its number and concise summary, followed by several sentences. Take for example issue No. 11 from November 1921; the heading “Journalism” came at No. 100 and it reads:

100. *Pewarta Soerabaja* November 2. The replacement of chief editor Tan Tek Yang of *Bintang Soerabaja* by Thio Tjin Boen is still uncertain. If the latter will not be in Soerabaja on November 10, Lauw Kong Huy will probably become the chief editor of *Bintang Soerabaja* as of January 1.¹⁹⁴

The above entry is a summary of *Pewarta Soerabaja*’s report on the internal affairs of *Bintang Soerabaja*. Because the chief editor usually determined the direction of a newspaper, such personnel change was worth reporting in *MCC*. In the same issue of the same section, at No. 115 is another news concerning Chinese journalism. It goes:

115. *Thien Sung Yit Po* November 18. In Semarang, a new Chinese journal called *Semarang Daily News* will be published.¹⁹⁵

Here a Chinese language newspaper *Thien Sung Yit Po* in Batavia reports about the launching of a new Chinese journal in Semarang. No other summary mentions the launching; and since almost no data on *Semarang Daily News* is available, this news snippet is valuable information for administrators charged with monitoring developments in the Indies press.

¹⁹⁴ *MMC*, No. 11 (November 1921).

¹⁹⁵ *MMC*, No. 11 (November 1921).

As the above example demonstrated, *MCC* was intentionally made compact. Almost no duplicated information occurred in the publication, and hence each topic and summary offered valuably efficient reading for busy colonial bureaucrats. It was also very useful because of its coverage of both Chinese language and Chinese-Malay language newspapers from domestic and international sources. Its format and content made *MCC* handy essential reading for Dutch officials who worked on Chinese affairs.

MCC reflected the priority that the Office for Chinese Affairs had set, which was domestic Chinese politics. In other words, the ways in which the Chinese articulated their grievance shaped the construction of *MCC*. That is why not only the politics of the Chinese, but also social issues such as education and complaints occupied major parts in *MCC*. The “Complaints” section was a particularly persistent and revealing component of the *MCC* publication with regard to the Chinese in the Indies. Therefore, *MCC* did not need to look further to find out problems in the Chinese community, because it could identify potential problems for the Indies state regarding the Chinese. In the mind of Dutch officials, the “Chinese Question” stood on its own and the Chinese could be isolated from the indigenous population.

Thus the 1910s ushered in the age of press monitoring and a glimpse of the coming age of political movement. These two were intimately intertwined, as the next chapter will demonstrate. The period saw uneasy intermingling between the liberal ideas of press freedom and the colonial anxiety of social order. In the Indies, this tension manifested itself in terms of institutional competition on how to conduct press monitoring, which ultimately resulted in a more explicit conceptualization of social division, particularly between the Chinese and indigenous residents of the colony. The official distinction between “natives” and “Chinese,” was arguably very much

determined by the state's apparatus for surveillance. The ideals of the Ethical Policy to create a modernized social system capable of producing modern colonial subjects turned out to be challenging, if not illusory. At this point, the Indies faced a fundamental test: To what extent could it tolerate political activism among its subjects and consider their aspirations, demands, and criticism. How much the Indies state was willing to listen would determine what kind of society it would be. At this point, the colonial roadmap remained unclear.

CHAPTER 4

PERSDELICT: CONFRONTATION, CONSENT, ABSURDITY

The 1919 popular novel *Student Hidjo*¹⁹⁶ begins with an introduction that reads:

This story has already been published in the newspaper under my management, the daily *Sinar Hindia*, in the year 1918.

Essentially, this writing is the product of my pen when I was serving a sentence due to a case of persdelict, in the civil and military jail in Weltevreden, for the period of one year. Although I could not write for the newspaper while in prison, I could produce books like *Sair Rempah-Rempah*, *Student Hidjo*, *Matahariah*, etc.

Hopefully this book can be of use to all its readers.

Marco Kartodikromo

Semarang, 26 March 1919¹⁹⁷

In those few lines, the author provides a representative picture of indigenous political activism in the 1910s in the Indies. The author, Marco Kartodikromo (1890-1932) or

¹⁹⁶ Marco Kartodikromo, *Student Hidjo* (Semarang: Masman & Stroink, 1919).

¹⁹⁷ Marco, *Student Hidjo*.

Ini tjeritera telah dimoeat dalam soerat kabar harian pangkoean kami: Sinar Hindia didalam tahoen 1918.

Sesoenggoehnja ini karangan boeah penna kami, waktoe kami mendjalani hoekoeman perkara persdelict, di Civiel en Militair Gevangenhuis di Weltevreden, lamanja satoe tahoen.

Maskipoen di pendjara itoe kami tidak bisa toelis menoelis didalem soerat kabar, tetapi kami bisa mengarang boekoe2 seperti: *Sair Rempah-Rempah*; *Student Hidjo*, *Matahariah* d.l.l.

Moedah moedahan ini boekoe bergoena bagi sekalian pembatjanja.

Marco Kartodikromo

Semarang, 26 Maart 1919

commonly referred to as “Mas Marco,” was a star journalist and well-known political activist. He was the editor-in-chief of *Doenia Bergerak* (World in Motion) and founder of the Union of Native Journalists (*Inlandse Journalisten Bond*) in Soerakarta. Here “journalists” played the role of movement (*pergerakan*) leaders without well-defined organizational base.¹⁹⁸ Mas Marco was known for his frequent organization of political rallies for SI, and for his stylistic speeches that excited his audience. In the introduction of *Student Hidjo*, Marco remarks that he has been imprisoned for a year because of *persdelict*, and yet he managed to produce books that continue to articulate his thoughts for his audience. In effect, the imprisonment had provided him with the opportunity to gather his thoughts and ideas, which he otherwise might not have been able to do had he continued to focus on organizing rallies all over Java. While he was physically imprisoned, his thoughts could roam freely and be organized into words and texts, which nonetheless could be passed on to his audience. In other words, it was the *persdelict* case that eventually enabled him to write those books after meditating intensely and quietly in his prison cell.

This is the image that journalists projected and their audience received regarding the consequence of *persdelict* in the late 1910s. Prison was granted a special cultural meaning in “the age in motion” (*zaman pergerakan*) in Java. It was thought that a prison was a space in which a *satria* (the knight in the traditional Javanese shadow plays) practiced asceticism and meditation to reflect and acquire supernatural power.¹⁹⁹ He lives and dies for moral purposes in order to realize the will of the gods, and is seen as devoting himself to his mission. The novel *Hikajat Kadiroen*, written by Marco’s contemporary political activist, Semaoen, is prefaced

¹⁹⁸ Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*, p. 82.

¹⁹⁹ On sacred power in Javanese political culture, see Benedict Anderson, “The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture,” in Benedict Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 17-77.

with a similar context of mental distillation: “I hope this story, which I have written with tears and pain in prison, will please many, that is, all readers and the general public.”²⁰⁰ Semaoen imagines that the *satria* image was shared not only by his readers, but also by the Dutch authorities in the Indies. In the novel, a Dutch Resident corroborates the rising social position of Kadiroen, the novel’s central character who was imprisoned for his political activity, by saying, “you are a *satria*. You have already said that you are brave [...] for you would certainly like to relieve all the burden of the people.”²⁰¹

This theme emerged as cliché in the politics of movement in colonial Dutch Indies. Ever since the Indies state added *persdelict* and speech offense articles into the Penal Code, many journalists regardless of race were sentenced to jail or forced to pay fines, and they were well aware of the “risks.” The implementation of these punitive articles was most rigorous in the 1910s and the 1920s. In “the age in motion,” among other political tools, newspapers and political gatherings played important roles for movement leaders to articulate and disseminate their ideas.²⁰² For the colonial authorities, press offense and speech offense articles were useful for suspending the activities and voices of activists for a period of time. It was the time when a reversal of progress towards a more liberal state was observed, as the authorities tried to contain those radical voices. Press freedom was supposed to be guaranteed by the law, but the reality showed recurring contradictions and disputes between journalists and the authorities. These “battles” entertained readers, who hailed the activist journalists as *satria* fighting for their people, and thus reflected Javanese cultural cliché.

²⁰⁰ Semaoen, *Hikajat Kadiroen* (Semarang: PKI Semarang, 1921), p. 1.

²⁰¹ Semaoen, *Hikajat Kadiroen*, p. 149.

²⁰² Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*.

Meanwhile, in the publishing world, market demands shaped the content of popular print material, especially after the market for literature expanded from the 1920s onwards. This newly emerging print market in turn shaped a new kind of journalism. Looking back to the heyday of newspapers in the 1920s, contemporary Dutch historian G. H. Von Faber, in 1930 described the sensational nature of newspapers in the Indies. He wrote that the reading public had the desire to look for “something spicy or sensational” and hence “pressmen turn now to the police reports and the law courts,” and “print the most repugnant details of murders of white men, suicides, rare bestialities in remote plantations, rape, gambling-house and brothel scandals, black magic, etc.”²⁰³ It was a time of social change in the 1920s when the population of urban middle class increased not only among Dutch residents but also of other racial groups, and it affected the ways in which journalism developed and survived. Radicalism and conservatism met in the press, and public opinion split over many issues. The growing number of newly arrived Dutch citizens and their demands for sensational journalism inevitably affected the indigenous and Chinese journalists in the Indies, who not only read Indies-Dutch newspapers, but also emulated their practices. Citations among Dutch, Chinese, indigenous newspapers were very common. It is understandable that popular literature in the Malay language, especially novels “about crime and lewdness,”²⁰⁴ often overlapped with newspaper coverage and took their sources from newspapers articles.²⁰⁵

In the age of political movement from the middle of the 1910s to the late 1920s, socio-economic circumstances underwent major changes. The expanding print market attracted new audiences susceptible to embracing the cultural clichés that had

²⁰³ Von Faber, *A Short History of Journalism in the Dutch East Indies*, pp. 126-127.

²⁰⁴ Balai Pustaka, *Balai Pustaka Sewadjarnja*, p. 29.

²⁰⁵ Tineke Hellwig, “Scandals, Homicide in Batavia and *Indo* Identity: Literary Representations of Indies Society,” *Archipel*, No. 63 (2002), pp. 153-172; James T. Siegel, *Fetish, Recognition, Revolution*.

already become familiar to those who already movement followers. Combative journalism found ways to continue expressing its opinions for its audience despite being subject to state repression, apolitical journalism found new audiences, while the colonial authorities tried to keep up with these developments. Court cases of the time showcased all the wits with which journalists defended themselves and sometimes outsmarted the authorities. Among others, *persdelict* cases that were reported in newspapers presented the general public with a spectacle of journalists against the authorities. Coverage of trial scenes not only reconstructed the supposed offense and trial process, but also provided a space for journalists (the defendants) to expose the ways by which the authorities exercised (and often overreached) their power, or, not infrequently, the incompetence of government officials in the Malay language, which had led to misunderstanding and charges of *persdelict*. In the form of newspaper articles, these trials emerged as political theater for journalists.

The *persdelict* article undoubtedly restricted journalistic activities. All journalists as well as much of their audience acknowledged this legal obstacle. However, contrary to conclusions reached in the conventional understanding of *persdelict* cases or cases of hate-sowing articles that arises from an exclusive focus on cases involving political activists in the late 1910s and early 1920s,²⁰⁶ there is little indication that any effective “state-wide” coordination existed among colonial authorities to conduct *persdelict* charges against journalists. Individual cases of popular political leaders and journalists reveal the arbitrariness of *persdelict* articles, which made the Penal court and its ruling appeared especially “unjust.” As I have noted in the previous chapter, *IPO*’s summary of *persdelict* cases failed to provide an adequate overall picture of indigenous political development in the Indies, and it was

²⁰⁶ Maters, *Van zachte wenk tot harde hand*.

not even objective in its method, because it depended completely on a highly variable level of knowledge and competence within the *IPO* staff.

In this chapter I feature three sample cases of *persdelict* to demonstrate how the authorities exercised *persdelict* in the late 1910s until the middle of the 1920s, and how journalists reacted to it. The first case took place in 1919 when indigenous journalist and leader of political activism Semaoen, was put on trial regarding his writings. The second case involves to the emergence of conservative journalism in the Indies. The third case deals with newspaper reports on *persdelict* that appeared in the Soerabaja-base Chinese-Malay newspaper *Sin Jit Po*. *Sin Jit Po* was a rather marginal newspaper in two senses: it was a Chinese-Malay newspaper that *IPO* did not pay close attention to, and it was located in Soerabaja where two other Chinese newspapers, *Pewarta Soerabaja* and *Soeara Poebliet*, enjoyed wider circulation. As my table below (Table 4-1: *Persdelict* cases from *IPO* (1917-1929) in the next section) shows, *IPO* did not list *Sin Jit Po* for its *persdelict* cases, and yet the newspaper carried *persdelict*-related articles – both its own cases and those of other newspapers. The first and third cases show how interaction between the authorities and journalists derived from the nature of *persdelict* articles as well as its application to individual cases. As the third case of *Sin Jit Po* shows, *persdelict* cases usually occurred in a local context and they did not necessarily relate to political activism. In fact, many *persdelict* cases turned out to stem from abuse of power by local authorities against journalists. What then were the real effects of *persdelict* (legal) articles on journalists in the Indies in the 1910s and the 1920s?²⁰⁷ This chapter examines the political and social function of *persdelict*, in particular the authorities' non-standardized criteria on *persdelict* and three different reactions by journalists.

²⁰⁷ Hate-sowing articles were infamous throughout Dutch colonial period. As Chapters 8 and 9 of this dissertation occasionally show, even in the 1930s many journalists were put imprisonment due to the violation of these articles.

Persdelict and the State

The Penal Code of the Indies

Chapter 5. Regulations against Public Order (*Misdrijven tegen de openbare orde*)

Article 154.

Any person who publicly expresses and instigates (*bevordert*) the feelings (*gevoelens*) of hostility (*vijandschap*), hatred (*haat*), or contempt (*minachting*) against the Netherlands government or the Indies government will be sentenced to a maximum of seven years imprisonment or fined 300 guilders at maximum.²⁰⁸

So goes article 154 of the Penal Code. Articles 154-161 of the Penal Code were known as “hate-sowing articles” (*haatzaai-artikelen*). These articles were introduced in 1914, making up the so-called Press and Speech Offence Codes (*Pers-en Spreekdelicten*). Articles 154-157 of the Penal Code contain repressive stipulations regarding the press. Article 155 decree a lesser prison term for a maximum of four years or a fine for a maximum of three hundred guilders as sanctions against persons who express “the feeling of enmity, hatred or disdain towards the governments of the Netherlands or of the Netherlands Indies” in a written or printed form meant for public circulation. According to Article 156, public expression of “the feeling of enmity, hatred, or contempt towards one or more group(s) of population in the Netherlands Indies” is also punishable by a maximum prison term of four years and a maximum

²⁰⁸ W. A. Engelbrecht, *De Nederlandsch-Indische Wetboeken (Benevens de Grondwet voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden, en de belangrijkste in Nederlandsch-Indië geldende wetten, algemeene verordeningen en besluiten, met verwijzing naar de op elk artikel betrekking hebbende Nederlandsch-Indiesch, Nederlandsche en Fransche Wetbepalingen)* (Soerabaja: J.M. Chs. Nijland, 1917), p. 1090.

fine of three hundred guilders.²⁰⁹ These articles were popularly known as “hate-sowing articles,” or in the words of Parada Harahap, “the most known articles among journalists and activists in the Indies.”²¹⁰ Residents of the Indies frequently read *persdelict* cases in the press and hence were also familiar with this particular code.

Meanwhile, Balai Poestaka’s weekly *IPO* had been used as a guiding administrative tool for identifying and disciplining trouble-make journalists, rather than to socialize the press codes. Journalists knew that *persdelict* charges could come at anytime. Generally, they were considered a practical way for the authorities to separate journalists from their audience or to hurt them and/or their newspapers by way of a monetary penalty. Balai Poestaka’s *IPO* was supposed to report on or signal cases that might cause social insecurity or unrest. In this practice, journalists were the likely main target because of their capacity to relate ideas to the public through newspapers, magazines, or other forms of mass-produced medium. For instance, in 1926, due to a series of application of Article 153 *bis* of the Penal Code, the voice of Soerakarta’s Communist Association of the Indies (*Perhimpoean Komunis di India*, PKI), *Mawa*, ceased publication, only one year after its inaugural issue.²¹¹

Over the period of twelve years, between December 1917 and January 1929, 101 cases of *persdelict* were reported in *IPO*. 74 cases occurred in the first 5 years after *IPO* was released (1918-1922), and more than ten leaders of the nationalist movement and journalists were incarcerated. *Persdelict* cases were often cited in *IPO* in the first few years, and then the number of reported cases declined, although ideally *persdelict* and *IPO* should work in tandem in order to control journalistic activities and writings. In other words, there were eventually many cases unreported in *IPO*. The

²⁰⁹ W. A. Engelbrecht, *Wetboek van Strafrecht voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Soerabaia: J. M. Chs. Njland, 1931), p. 1090.

²¹⁰ Parada Harahap, *Journalistiek: Pers-en Spreekdelictenboek* (Weltevreden: Uitgevers Mij. “Bintang Hindia,” 1924), p. 49.

²¹¹ On information on *Mawa*, see Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*, pp. 324, 332-333.

attached table, “4-1: *Persdelict* from *IPO* (1917-1929),” lists *persdelict* cases, which I compiled from all the *IPO*s issued from 1917 to 1929. It does not by all means reflect the whole aspect of *persdelict* cases; in fact, the actual number is thought to be several times more. But at least the chart can gives a reflection of the cases that the authorities were paying attention to, and the variation of newspapers covering those cases. The left hand column contains the names of personnel and newspapers affected by *persdelict*; the right-hand column lists the newspapers that covered the related case, as reported in *IPO*; the middle column gives the timeline of the coverage.

Table 4-1: *Persdelict* cases from *IPO* (1917-1929)

Names of journalists/newspapers charged with <i>persdelict</i>	Dates of coverage (year/month/day)	Newspapers covering <i>persdelict</i> cases as cited in <i>IPO</i>
Padmawiganda (editor <i>Medan Rajat & Hindia Moeda</i>)	17/12/17 17/12/20	<i>Neratja, Kaoem-Moeda</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 51, 1917
Soetan Andomo (editor <i>Tjahaja Sari Tjermin</i>)	17/12/18	<i>Oetoesan-Melajoe</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 52, 1917
Soetan Parlindoengan (chief editor <i>Pewartas Deli</i>)	18/2/11	<i>Pewartas Deli</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 7, 1918
	18/5/15	<i>Pewartas Deli</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 21, 1918
	18/9/20	<i>Pewartas Deli</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 39, 1918
	18/10/12	<i>Pewartas Deli</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 41, 1918
J.C. Weijde Muller (chief editor <i>Warna Warta</i>)	18/ 4/4	<i>Warna Warta</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 14, 1918
	18/5/11	<i>Sin Po</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 19, 1918
	18/5/23-25	<i>Warna Warta</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 21, 1918
	18/7/10	<i>Warna Warta</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 28, 1918
Semaoen (editor <i>Si Tetap</i>)	18/4/13	<i>Djawa Tengah</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 15, 1918
<i>Benih Merdeka</i> (chief editor)	18/4/13	<i>Benih Merdeka</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 16, 1918
	18/4/16	<i>Andalas</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 17, 1918
Phoa (chief editor <i>Sinar Sumatra</i>)	18/5/30	<i>Warna Warta</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 22, 1918
Soeharijo (<i>Sinar Hindia</i>)	18/6/ 6	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 23, 1918
	18/6/22	<i>Soeara Rajat</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 25, 1918
Goei Tjeng Lian (staff <i>Sin Po</i>)	18/6/13	<i>Sin Po</i> in <i>IPO</i> no. 24, 1918

Table 4-1 (Continued)

Z. Mohamad (staff <i>Sinar Hindia</i>)	18/3/7	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 27, 1918
	19/1/23	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 4, 1919
	19/8/23	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 34, 1919
	19/10/8	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 41, 1919
Schreutelkamp (editor <i>Bandoenger</i>)	18/7/27	<i>Kaoem Moeda</i> in IPO no. 30, 1918
	18/12/2	<i>Kaoem Moeda</i> in IPO no. 49, 1918
	18/12/9	<i>Neratja</i> in IPO no. 50, 1918
S. Goenawan (<i>Kaoem Moeda</i>)	18/8/16	<i>Kaoem Moeda</i> in IPO no. 32, 1918
	18/10/28	<i>Kaoem Moeda</i> in IPO no. 44, 1918
	18/4/15	<i>Kaoem Moeda</i> in IPO no. 16, 1918
Rm. B.S. (<i>Djawa Hisworo</i>)	9/8/18	<i>Djawa Hisworo</i> in IPO no. 32, 1918
Tirtodanoedjo (editor <i>Oetoesan Hindia</i>)	18/9/14	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 37, 1918
	18/12/2	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 49, 1918
	18/12/9	<i>Neratja & Kaoem Moeda</i> in IPO no. 50, 1918
	18/12/23	<i>Kaoem Moeda</i> in IPO no. 52, 1918
	19/1/20	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 4, 1919
	19/3/12	<i>Neratja & Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 11, 1919
	19/6/10	<i>Neratja</i> in IPO no. 24, 1919
Darsono (<i>Soeara Ra'jat</i>)	9/9/18	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 37, 1918
	18/9/13	<i>Soeara Ra'jat</i> in IPO no. 37, 1918
	18/9/20	<i>Soeara Ra'jat</i> in IPO no. 38, 1918
Brandsteder ²¹² (?)	18/9/28	<i>Soeara Ra'jat</i> in IPO no. 39, 1918
Marco (<i>Sinar Hindia</i>)	18/12/14	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 50, 1918
	19/1/4	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 1, 1919
	19/1/8	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 2, 1919
A. Moeis, Semaoen, Darsono	18/12/18	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 51, 1918
<i>Kaoem Moeda</i>	19/1/4	<i>Kaoem Moeda</i> in IPO no. 1, 1919

²¹² J. A. Brandsteder was the leader of trade union of sailors serving in the Navy (BMMP), which was the trade union for European personnel in the Dutch Navy in the Atlantic, European, and in the Pacific. While living in Soerabaja, he was among the pioneer members of the ISDV (Indonesian Social Democratic Association) founded in May 1914 with Sneevliet as its chairperson.

Table 4-1 (Continued)		
Darsono (<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i>)	19/1/7	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 2, 1919
	19/1/14	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 3, 1919
	19/3/14	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 11, 1919
Abdoel Moeis	19/2/3	<i>Neratja</i> in IPO no. 6, 1919
	19/2/24	<i>Neratja</i> in IPO no. 7, 1919
Tjokroamidjojo (director <i>Sinar Hindia</i>)	19/1/12	<i>Neratja</i> in IPO no. 7, 1919
	19/3/22	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 12, 1919
Semaoen (director-editor <i>Sinar Hindia</i>)	19/2/19	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 7, 1919
	19/3/13	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 11, 1919
	19/3/15	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 11, 1919
	19/4/20	<i>Si Tetap</i> in IPO no. 17, 1919
	19/7/12	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 28, 1919
Abdoellah Ahmad	19/2/15	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 7, 1919
Mas Atje Padmawiganda (editor <i>Perobahan</i>)	19/3/1	<i>Perobahan</i> in IPO no. 10, 1919
	19/3/19	<i>Perobahan</i> in IPO no. 12, 1919
	19/3/22	<i>Neratja</i> in IPO no. 12, 1919
	19/8/9	<i>Perobahan</i> in IPO no. 33, 1919
<i>Darmo Kondo</i>	19/3/3	<i>Darmo Kondo</i> in IPO no. 10, 1919
Moehammad Joenoes (chief editor <i>Benih Mardika</i>)[& K. Mangoen Atmojo (chief editor <i>Sama Rasa</i>)]	19/3/10	<i>Pewarta Deli</i> in IPO no. 11, 1919
	19/3/11	<i>Benih Mardika</i> in IPO no. 12, 1919
	19/3/18	<i>Benih Mardika</i> in IPO no. 12, 1919
	19/3/22	<i>Benih Mardika</i> in IPO no. 13, 1919
	19/3/23	<i>Benih Mardika</i> in IPO no. 13, 1919
	19/4/2	<i>Benih Mardika</i> in IPO no. 14, 1919
	19/4/6	<i>Bromartani</i> in IPO no. 15, 1919
	19/4/28	<i>Benih Mardika</i> in IPO no. 18, 1919
Darsono (<i>Soeara Ra'jat</i>)	19/3/17	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 12, 1919
	19/3/24	<i>Neratja</i> in IPO no. 13, 1919
	19/3/27	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 13, 1919
	19/7/28	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 31, 1919
Manap (staff <i>Sinar Hindia</i>)	19/3/31	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 14, 1919
	19/7/15	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 29, 1919

Table 4-1 (Continued)		
<i>Benih Mardika</i> (editor)	19/3/26	<i>Benih Mardika</i> in IPO no. 14, 1919
	19/4/1	<i>Benih Mardika</i> in IPO no. 14, 1919
	2/ 4/19	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 14, 1919
H. Fachroedin (<i>Sri Diponegoro</i>)	19/3/24	<i>Sri Diponegoro</i> in IPO no. 14, 1919
	7/ 5/19	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 19, 1919
S. Partoatmodjo (editor <i>Sinar Hindia</i>)	1/ 5/19	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 18, 1919
	19/5/20	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 21, 1919
	19/8/18	<i>Neratja & Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 34, 1919
	19/12/17	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 51, 1919
<i>Sinar Hindia</i> (editor)	19/5/17	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 20, 1919
	19/5/30	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 22, 1919
<i>Sama Rata</i>	19/5/7	<i>Pewarta Deli</i> in IPO no. 20, 1919
<i>Padjadjaran</i> (editor)	19/6/28	<i>Padjadjaran</i> in IPO no. 26, 1919
	19/11/1	<i>Padjadjaran</i> in IPO no. 45, 1919
Soemargo (assistant instructor)	19/9/2	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 36, 1919
	19/9/30	<i>Perasaan</i> in IPO no. 41, 1919
	19/12/16	<i>Perasaan</i> in IPO no. 1, 1920
Tirtodanoedjo (<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i>)	19/9/25	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 39, 1919
Soeharijo (<i>Sinar Hindia</i>)	19/10/18	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 42, 1919
	19/10/21	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 43, 1919
Parada Harahap (<i>Sinar Merdeka</i>)	19/11/17 & 24	<i>Sri Diponegoro</i> in IPO no. 48, 1919
Sidi Maharadja (editor <i>Oetoesan Melajoe</i>)	19/12/15	<i>Oetoesan Melajoe</i> in IPO no. 52, 1919
	19/12/24	<i>Warta Hindia</i> in IPO no. 1, 1920
Partondo (editor <i>Oetoesan Hindia</i>)	19/12/30	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 1, 1920
<i>Kaoem Moeda</i> (editor)	20/4/1	<i>Kaoem Moeda</i> in IPO no. 14, 1920
	20/7/12	<i>Kaoem Moeda</i> in IPO no. 28, 1920
Soerjo Mitihardjo (<i>Medan Bergerak</i>) & Moedio Wiknosoetomo (editor <i>Panggoegah</i>)	20/4/23	<i>Pewarta Soerabaja</i> in IPO no. 14, 1920
Soebroeto (editor <i>Boeroeh Bergerak</i>)	20/4/26	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 14, 1920
Soekindar (editor <i>Sinar Hindia</i>)	20/7/28	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 31, 1920
	20/6/12	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 49, 1920

Table 4-1 (Continued)		
Mohammad Kasan (secretary SI Semarang)	20/10/25	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 44, 1920
Agam Ma'soem (ex-editor <i>Sora Merdeka</i>)	20/11/2	<i>Sora Merdeka</i> in IPO no. 47, 1920
Kho Tjoean Wan (co-editor <i>Sinar Hindia</i>)	20/11/24	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 48, 1920
Soewardi (editor <i>Persatoean Hindia</i>)	20/12/--	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 49, 1920
Liem Ban Goei (staff <i>Sinar Hindia</i>)	20/12/6	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 49, 1920
Darsono	20/12/13	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 51, 1920
S. Goenawan (<i>Sora Merdeka</i>)	20/12/27 & 30	<i>Kaoem Moeda</i> in IPO no. 1, 1921
	20/12/29	<i>Sora Merdeka</i> in IPO no. 2, 1921
	21/1/3	<i>Sora Merdeka</i> in IPO no. 7, 1921
Mangoen Atmodjo (ex-chief editor <i>Sama Rata</i>)	20/12/20	<i>Pewartas Deli</i> in IPO no. 2, 1921
	21/2/2	<i>Benih Merdeka</i> in IPO no. 7, 1921
Thio Tjin Boen (chief editor <i>Perniagaan</i>)	21/1/7	<i>Pewartas Deli</i> in IPO no. 3, 1921
<i>Sri Djojodjo</i>	21/1/27	<i>Sri Djojodjo</i> in IPO no. 6, 1921
Abdoel Manap (chief editor <i>Hindia Sepakat</i>)	21/2/12	<i>Hindia Sepakat</i> in IPO no. 11, 1921
Soekindar (editor <i>Sinar Hindia</i>)	21/3/26	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 14, 1921
Lokot Panangaran (staff <i>Sinar Merdeka</i>)	21/5/11	<i>Pewartas Deli</i> in IPO no. 21, 1921
Datoe' Mangkoeto Alam	21/4/20 & 5/11	<i>Warta Hindia</i> in IPO no. 21, 1921
Mohamad Samin & Mohamad Noer (editor <i>Benih Merdeka</i>)	21/5/26	<i>Benih Merdeka</i> in IPO no. 27, 1921
<i>Oetoesan Malay</i> (editor)	21/9/19	<i>Perniagaan</i> (reported in <i>Warna Warta</i>) in IPO no. 39, 1921
Tjio Peng Hong (editor <i>Algemeen Advertentieblad</i>)	21/10/3-8	<i>Kaoem Moeda</i> in IPO no. 41, 1921
Moehamad Said (editor <i>Neratja</i>)	21/10/24-29	<i>Neratja</i> in IPO no. 44, 1921
Abdoel Manap (<i>Hindia Sepakat</i>)	21/10/22, 25, 29	<i>Benih Merdeka</i> in IPO no. 46, 1921
Lim Soen Hien (editor <i>Warta Hindia</i>)	21/Dec -22/Jan	<i>Sinar Merdeka</i> in IPO no. 5, 1922
Marah Sri Mahadewa (editor <i>Perobahan</i>)	22/3/18	<i>Warta Hindia</i> in IPO no. 14, 1922
Gatot Sastrodihardjo (editor <i>Panggoegah</i>)	22/7/14	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 25, 1922
A. Dasoeke & Sismadi Sastrosiswojo (editor <i>Islam Bergerak</i>)	22/6/19-24	<i>Sinar Hindia</i> in IPO no. 26, 1922

Table 4-1 (Continued)		
K. Boedimandjono alias Patih Mandonosrojo (<i>Panggoegah</i>)	22/7/5	<i>Panggoegah</i> in IPO no. 29, 1922
	22/7/31-22/8/5	<i>Kaoem Moeda</i> in IPO no. 32, 1922
<i>Neratja</i> (editor)	22/8/26	<i>Neratja</i> in IPO no. 36, 1922
<i>Sama Tengah</i> (?)	22/9/6-14	<i>Kaoem Moeda</i> in IPO no. 39, 1922
<i>Java Bode</i> (?)	22/11/21	<i>Neratja</i> in IPO no. 48, 1922
Salim (<i>Timor</i>)	22/12/5-14	<i>Neratja</i> in IPO no. 50, 1922
Tengkoe Kamaloeddin (editor <i>Pewarta Deli</i>)	22/12/16-19	<i>Oetoesan Malay</i> in IPO no. 52, 1922
Martopengalasan (ex-editor <i>Oetoesan Hindia</i>)	23/1/2-9	<i>Oetoesan Hindia</i> in IPO no. 2, 1923
Pedro Almansjoer (& Abdoel 'Xarim)	23/3/30	<i>Oetoesan Ra'jat</i> in IPO no. 17, 1923
	23/4/10	<i>Oetoesan Ra'jat</i> in IPO no. 19, 1923
Arga	23/8/25, 27, 28	<i>Neratja</i> in IPO no. 34, 1923
<i>Neratja</i> (chief editor)	23/9/3-11	<i>Neratja</i> in IPO no. 37, 1923
Anwar	23/10/27	<i>Halilintar</i> in IPO no. 45, 1923
Soetan Rai (chief editor <i>Itqan</i>)	23/11/25, 23/12/5, 23/12/15	<i>Pemandangan Islam</i> in IPO no. 7, 1924
Soetan Soemoeroeng	24/2/6-11	<i>Neratja</i> in IPO no. 7, 1924
	24/2/6-19	<i>Pantjaran Berita</i> in IPO no. 7, 1924
	24/7/9	<i>Persamaan</i> in IPO
Soeroso (chief editor <i>Zaman Kiwari</i>)	24/6/2-7	<i>Hindia Baroe</i> in IPO no. 24, 1924
Mohamad Nasid gl. St. Permata (<i>Warta Hindia</i>)	24/5/16-26	<i>Tjaja Soematra</i> in IPO no. 24, 1924
<i>Soeara Batak</i> (leader)	25/5/5 & 7	<i>Persamaan</i> in IPO no. 20, 1925
Nawawi Arief (editor <i>Soeara Tambang</i>)	25/7/31	<i>Soeara Tambang</i> in IPO no. 34, 1925
Maamoor Lubies (<i>Oetoesan Minahasa</i>)	26/1/1	<i>Sajoer Maintjat</i> in IPO no. 6, 1926
Siswo & Soekandar (communists, <i>Mowo</i>)	26/7/22, 23, 24	<i>Darmo Kondo</i> in IPO no. 32, 1926
<i>Boemi Malay</i> (chief editor)	27/8/18	<i>Boemi Malay</i> in IPO no. 35, 1927
<i>Asahan</i>	27/12/28	<i>Asahan</i> in IPO no. 2, 1928
<i>Benih Timoer</i> (editor)	22(?)1/28	<i>Benih Timoer</i> in IPO no. 6, 1928
	12(?)2/28	<i>Benih Timoer</i> in IPO no. 8, 1928

Table 4-1 (Continued)		
Tan Tek Bie (chief editro, <i>Tjin Po</i>)	28/3/09	<i>Bintang Timoer</i> in IPO no. 12, 1928
	28/3/31	<i>Pewarta Deli</i> in IPO no. 15, 1928
	28/4/17–28/5/2	<i>Pewarta Deli</i> in IPO no. 19, 1928
	28/4/28–5/12	<i>Pertja Timoer</i> in IPO no. 19, 1928
	28/7/26& 28	<i>Pewarta Deli</i> in IPO no. 33, 1928
<i>Oetoesan Sumatra</i> (editor)	28/4/19– 5/5	<i>Oetoesan Sumatra</i> in IPO no. 19, 1928
R. Bh. Sabaroedin (chief editor <i>Benih Timoer</i>)	28/5/7-15	<i>Benih Timoer</i> in IPO no. 20, 1928
Manoewar (chief editor <i>Pembrita Kemadjoean</i>)	28/6/30	<i>Warna Warta</i> in IPO no. 28, 1928
<i>Soeara Tapanoeli</i> (chief editor)	287/4-8	<i>Soeara Tapanoeli</i> in IPO no. 32, 1928
Lahab & Alwi (editors <i>Persatoean</i>)	28/8/29	<i>Warta Hindia</i> in IPO no. 36, 1928
Maradja Sajoeti Loebis (editor <i>Persatoean</i>)	28/12/5-13	<i>Fadjar Asia</i> in IPO no. 50, 1928
<i>Al Madjar</i> (editor)	29/1/09	<i>Al Majdjar</i> in IPO no. 5, 1929
<i>Djawa Tengah</i>	29/1/09	<i>Djawa Tengah</i> in IPO no. 5, 1929
K. Wybrands (<i>Bintang Timoer</i>)	29/1/28-31	<i>Bintang Timoer</i> in IPO no. 6, 1929

[Source: *IPO*, 1917-1929]

In terms of numbers, this chart shows a distinct tendency. *Persdelict* cases occurred frequently from the end of the 1910s up to 1921. More than ten journalists and activists were affected with fine or imprisonment; the numbers covered in *IPO* are 16 in 1918, 23 in 1919, 12 in 1920 and 1921. In terms of *IPO* coverage, details of some *persdelict* cases included only their rulings, while for other cases, reporting was more complete from initial charges through court trials, imprisonment, and eventual

release of those affected. As the *IPO* summary was organized by newspapers, government officials who were interested in a particular case, person, or organization were able to just focus on the newspaper of concern.²¹³ As surveillance over the radicalization of political activism tightened, the number of *IPO* summaries on newspaper articles covering *persdelict* increased. But contrary to the previous years, the year of 1922 shows noticeable decrease in this regard. The number of “victims” who were affected by *persdelict* reached nine in 1922, and never exceeded ten afterwards. The highest number after 1923 was nine in 1928, reflecting the reaction to communist uprisings in 1926 and 1927.

Curiously, the number of *persdelict* cases cited in *IPO* does not really reflect the political development and the reaction of the Indies state in the 1920s. It is commonly understood that when taking office in 1921, Governor-General Dirk M. G. Fock (1921-1926) tightened surveillance and took more suppressive measures than his predecessors. It was the time of reaction by the Indies state against indigenous movements. Fock was more conservative than his predecessor Limburg Stirum, and at the same time, economic depression hitting the Indies from the middle of 1921 to 1923 required the Indies state to exercise a tight budget, which translated into less tolerant approaches to unfavorable labor movements and indigenous actions (demands). During his five years in office, Fock enacted several restrictive laws against indigenous movement. A typical example was the additional articles of the Penal Code; 161 *bis* which was installed in 1923 to make indigenous labor strikes illegal, while 153 *bis* and *ter* restricted any movement and discourse that might cause public insecurity.²¹⁴

²¹³ Although the articles dealing with *persdelict* cases include repetitions from reports of suspicion, trial, imprisonment, and release from prison, I managed to identify individual cases and count them for the list.

²¹⁴ Chapter 5 of this dissertation will examine these added articles of the Penal Code.

Around 1921 the Indies state started to tighten its control of the flourishing indigenous movements. In April 1921 Fock replaced Governor-General Johan Paul Van Limburg Stirum, who was a liberal and took a neutral stand towards movements by the indigenous people of the Indies. Under Limburg Stirum's rule, the People's Council (*Volksraad*) was established in December 1916, so that the indigenous leaders could participate in the quasi-parliament to discuss issues concerning the Indies. Also during the Limburg Stirum period, Semaoen emerged as a leader and was successful in organizing a number of strikes. The more ideologically conservative Governor-General Fock was less interested in the development of indigenous associations that could become part of the colonial system governing politics and labor issues, and enacted instead a series of policies aimed at repressing emerging political voices. During his term, the police apparatus expanded and became more vital in surveillance networks monitoring native movements, whereas the role of the Advisor for Native Affairs, which had provided the basic information on native affairs for policy-makers, began to be pushed into the shadows. The "age of reaction" had arrived.

It is to be noted that *persdelict* articles was one of many regulations in the Penal Code. If its effectiveness decreased, it is logical to think that other articles of the Penal Code would be made more effective to restrain indigenous movements. But in reality, although *IPO* did not cover all *persdelict*-related cases, the number of *persdelict* cases did not decrease at all; many journalists complained about the Penal Code and had to live with it.

IPO's attention to *persdelict* cases concentrated on certain newspapers. Its organization based on newspapers allowed its readers to keep track of the editorship of individual papers from 1918 to 1929. As I will explain below, *IPO* intensively followed *persdelict* cases only during these twelve years. It irregularly made lists that consisted of names of newspaper, their editorship and tendencies. Curious as it may

seem, given that *persdelict* articles in essence targeted individual journalists, the pattern of citations of *persdelict* cases shows that *IPO* focused on several “radical” or locally representative newspapers rather than paying consistent attention to individual journalists. This pattern was reflected the ways in which *IPO* conducted press survey, translated, and summarized newspaper articles. Considering the size of vernacular press in the Indies, it is likely that several staff were involved in translating and making summaries for *IPO*. A review of the summaries of *persdelict* cases published in *IPO* bears out this assumption. The way in which *IPO* summarized vernacular press was not standardized, and the Malay vernacular press in Java was given more attention than those outside Java. In effect, the Indies state focused on conducting surveillance in Java because this was the place where indigenous movements became increasingly radical since the late 1910s until the middle of the 1920s. Those citations that included regions outside of Java most frequently concerned the vernacular press in Sumatra.

In most cases the format of the *IPO* summary of *persdelict* cases were rather simple, covering mainly the hard facts of the cases – who were accused of *persdelict*, when, where, and what the verdict was. Dutch translations of excerpts from the original articles in *IPO* sometimes showed what the cited vernacular press thought about the case. For instance, *IPO* lists the *persdelict* against Batavia-based *Neratja* (Summation) as its first case, and the summary is as follows:

NERATJA 17 Dec. 1917, no. 116

Native Journalists

Another Martyr. M. Atje Padmawiganda

In connection with the condemnation of Mister Padmawiganda to 3 months imprisonment for *persdelict*, which sentence he is now set to undergo,

Neratja's comment is that the above-named journalist is currently paying his debt, but a debt which the native readers will learn from.

May his countrymen appreciate his services.²¹⁵

From this example, it is clear that *IPO* does not interpret, and rarely comments on, the newspaper articles it covered. Its straightforward translation/summary shows how newspapers themselves reported *persdelict* cases. The headline "Another Martyr," suggesting that the penalized journalist was sacrificing himself for his readers, appears to be merely copied from *Neratja*, to signal the attention it attracted within the newspapers' audience.

IPO's coverage of *persdelict* cases had its focus. Outside of Java, vernacular newspapers that were often cited were those of Padang and the neighboring cities in West Sumatra. This makes sense because since the late 1910s in West Sumatra Islamic religious schools absorbed ideas of anticolonialism and reformist Islam from abroad, which radicalized the people. That was why journalists of the Padang-based *Oetosan Melajoe* were under the *IPO* surveillance. *IPO* originally characterized *Oetosan Melajoe* as a "Malay traditional law (*adat*) party," but in August 1922 it became "liberal," and in October 1923 it was noted as "liberal, but with some radical elements." This changing character of *Oetoesan Melajoe* was reflected by its editors-in-chief; from the outset Datoe Soetan Maharadja held the position, but in 1922 S. Maharadja Lelo and in 1923 Abd. Moeis, respectively, took over. *Oetoesan Melajoe*

²¹⁵ "Inlandsche Journalisten," *Neratja*, No. 116 (December 17, 1917) in *IPO*, No. 51, 1917.

NERATJA 17 Dec. 1917, no. 116

INLANDSCHE JOURNALISTEN

Weer een martelaar. M. Atje Padmawiganda

In verband met de veroordeeling van den heer Padmawiganda wegens een persdelict tot 3 maanden gevangenisstraf, welke straf hij nu bezig is te ondergaan, de opmerking der *Neratja* dat genoemde journalist thans zijn schuld gaat betalen, maar een schuld, waarvan de Inlanders profijt zullen trekken.

Moge zijn landgenooten zijn verdiensten naar waarde schatten!

evolved from being traditional to liberal with some radical characteristics, yet it appeared as a case of *persdelict* in *IPO* in 1919, during the editorship of Datoe Soetan Maharadja, when the newspaper was labeled a traditional law party.²¹⁶

The case was reported in the December 15, 1919 issue of *Oetoesan Melajoe*²¹⁷ and followed up by *Warta Hindia* on December 24, 1919.²¹⁸ *Oetoesan Melajoe*'s article recounts how the prosecutor applied *persdelict* articles to its journalist. But the authorities were concerned less about one particular article than the accumulated accusations that would lead to punishment. In the case of Datoe Soetan Maharadja, the final straw was his article "*Pelita Kecil*" (Small Lantern) in the December 17, 1919, issue, in which he wrote about the situation on Java in 1892, when famine prevailed and people sold their children for 25 cents at the market to ward off starvation. This history, argued the journalist, showed how Dutch officials brought nothing but misery and poison to the little people. Prior to the publication of this article, Datoek Soetan Maharadja had already received several warnings for his other articles, which similarly defended the interests of common people. Given this background, *Raad van Justitie* demanded a fine of 100 guilders, but later the higher court altered the penalty to one month imprisonment. In addition to his *persdelict* case, Datoek Soetan Maharadja had been placed under surveillance for allegations of his connections with Wahhabism, even though he was called a Sjafeist by the authorities.²¹⁹ Considering his social titles – Datoek and Soetan – it is no doubt that

²¹⁶ Taufik Abdullah, "Modernization in the Minangkabau World: West Sumatra in the Early Decades of the Twentieth Century," in Claire Holt, Benedict Anderson, and James Siegel (eds.), *Culture and Politics in Indonesia* (Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur: Equinox Publishing, 2007), pp. 179-245.

²¹⁷ *IPO*, No. 52, 1919.

²¹⁸ *IPO*, No. 1, 1920.

²¹⁹ Authorities paid wrongly special attention to the development of Wahhabism in West Sumatra since the end of the nineteenth century. Wahhabism was a reform movement to free Islamic societies of traditional cultural practices and interpretations and to purify Islam. It was started by the followers of Ibn 'Abd ul-Wahhab, who instituted a reform of Islam in Arabia in the eighteenth century. Sjafei was one of the four orthodox jurists (Hanafi, Sjafei, Hanbali, Maliki) who were rejected by the Wahhabis. "Persdelicten," *Oetoesan Melajoe*, No. 252 (15 December 1919) in *IPO* No. 52/1919, which was also compiled in secret mail report 74x/20.

he was a local aristocrat and a well-known figure in the community. The authorities needed to take into consideration the social impact of his arrest and imprisonment, not only as a journalist, but also as a person of high social influence.

As far as *IPO* was concerned, *Oetoesan Melajoe* was charged with *persdelict* only once, even though the colonial authority's motive might be accumulative. *Oetoesan Melajoe*'s case was in this sense exceptional. After being published in *IPO* No. 52/1919, the summary of the case was also compiled in the colonial secret mail report No. 74/1920. Padang was the center of publishing business in Sumatra up until the 1920s, a point that I shall examine below. The Sumatran presses frequently cited in *IPO* were from Medan (East Coast of Sumatra) and Tanjoeng Karang (South Sumatra). It is thus safe to say that the reason why Sumatran vernacular presses were often cited in summaries of *persdelict* cases is not necessarily because the Sumatran cases posed (greater) danger to the colonial law and order, but because the *IPO* staff paid extra attention to them due to the local development of Islam.

The newspapers often cited in *IPO* for their coverage on *persdelict* cases were *Neratja*, *Kaoem Moeda* (Young Generation), *Sinar Hindia* (Indies Gleam), *Oetoesan Hindia* (Indies Envoy), *Soeara Ra'jat* (People's Voice), *Perobahan* (Transformation), *Benih Mardika* (Seeds of Freedom), and *Pewartu Deli* (Deli Herald), all of which were published either Java or Sumatra. In the cases on Java, *IPO* reviews of vernacular press were more representative and useful by selecting major newspapers from major cities. Major cities in Java included Batavia, Bandoeng, Semarang, and Soerabaja; while *Neratja*, *Kaoem Moeda*, *Sinar Hindia*, and *Oetoesan Hindia* represented local newspapers respectively, and were generally perceived as radical press. As I have noted before, the editor-in-chief generally shaped the qualities and areas of interest of a newspaper and its audience. Consequently, *IPO*'s categorization of the vernacular press was also determined by who was in charge of the editorial board. A look at how

IPO characterized leading newspapers and identified their main editors in connection with *persdelict* cases exemplifies this point.

IPO first categorized the Batavia-based *Neratja* as “Radical Sarekat Islam” (1918 – November 1920), and then changed its categorization of this same paper numerous times in subsequent years: To “Radical” (March 1922 – January 1923), “No affiliated party, sometimes evolutionary and sometimes radical” (October 1923), and “sometimes evolutionary and sometimes radical” (March 1924). *IPO* also tracked its changing editors over time: Abdoel Moeis (1918), H. A. Salim (1919), Moh. Kanoen, and Djojosoediro (1920), Soetan Pamoentjak (latter half of 1920 – January 1923), R. St. Palindih (July 1923 – October 1923), and H. Soetadi (March 1924). In a 1918 issue of *IPO*, *Neratja* is listed at the top of all vernacular press based on Balai Poestaka’s recognition of radicality, but its ranking went down after 1922 to third and fourth places. *Neratja* appeared for the last time in March 1924 *IPO*. The Bandoeng-based *Kaoem Moeda* was categorized as “Generally for [the political party] *Insulinde* and inclined towards Sarekat Islam” at the beginning, and then changed to “Radical Sarekat Islam” (1919 – 1920), “Moderate” (November 1920 – March 1922), “P.E.B.” (*Politiek Economische Bond*, or Political Economic Union) (August 1922– July 1923), “Evolutionary P.E.B.” (October 1923 – September 1926), and “Neutral” (March 1927). The editors were A. H. Wignjadisastra (1918 – 1920), S. Prawirasoedirdja (March 1922 – this was the year when *Kaoem Moeda* was at the top of *IPO*’s “watch” list), and M. A. Padmawiganda (August 1922 – October 1923); from March 1924 until March 1927, when it made the list for the last time, there was no name as editor. *Sinar Hindia* in Semarang was categorized as “Sarekat Islam and ISDV” (*Indische Sosiaal Democratische Vereniging*, Indies Social Democratic Association) (1918) on the outset, and then labeled “Extremist ISDV” (1919 – November 1920), “Communist” (PKI) (March 1922), “Communism, Sarekat Islam” (August 1922 – July 1923), and

“Sarekat Islam organ, formerly communist” (October 1923 – July 1924). The listed editors were Semaoen (1918), Semaoen, Marco Kartodikromo, Sanjoto, Darsono (1919), Semaoen, S. Partoatmodjo, Darsono (1920), Semaoen, Soekindar, Darsono (November 1920 – March 1922), Semaoen (August 1922 – January 1923), Samsi (July 1923 – October 1923), and Soebakat (March 1924 – July 1924). *Soeara Ra’jat* was a kind of byproduct of *Sinar Hindia*. It was a Semarang-based bi-monthly, which in the beginning was categorized as “Extreme” (November 1920), then “PKI” (March 1922), “PKI organ” (August 1922), and “Communist, PKI organ” (January 1923 – December 1925). Its editors were Partondo (November 1920 – July 1923), A. Moethalib (October 1923 – October 1924), and A. Soekindar (January 1925 – December 1925). *Oetoesan Hindia*, a Soerabaja-based daily, was characterized as “Sarekat Islam, [Javanese-oriented social movement and organization] Djawa Dipo” (1918) and “Radical Sarekat Islam” (1919 – January 1923), whose editor-in-chief was O. S. Tjokroaminoto (1918 – January 1923), except in 1918 when Tirtodanoedjo was also on the editorial board.

The case of *Sinar Hindia* and *Oetoesan Hindia* was obviously influenced by the orientation of their lead editors. Semaoen was a well-known leftist activist, while Tjokroaminoto was the leader of SI. Initially they were both activists of SI, but Semaoen turned more leftist and radical, causing the split from SI and the subsequent formation of the Communist Association of the Indies, PKI.²²⁰ *Soeara Ra’jat* was a sister periodical of *Sinar Hindia*, and both were considered PKI organs. On the contrary, *Neratja* and *Kaoem Moeda* were slightly different from the other three newspapers. Their characteristics gradually shifted from “radical” to either “evolutionary” or “moderate” and “neutral.” These two newspapers often changed

²²⁰ In June 1924, the party was renamed the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (Indonesian Communist Party), retaining the initials PKI.

their chief editors in charge, and their affiliation with political organizations such as SI became increasingly unclear.

In the case of Sumatra, *Pewarta Deli*, *Benih Mardeka*, and *Perobahan* from Medan and Tandjoeng Karang were often cited in *IPO*. *Pewarta Deli* and *Benih Mardeka* might be representative press in Medan, but newspapers from other major cities such as Padang, Bukittinggi, and Palembang in Sumatra were rarely cited. *Pewarta Deli*, a Medan-based paper, was characterized as “Generally Sarekat Islam” in 1918, and then changed to “Radical (Tapanoeli-oriented organ)” (1919 – 1920), “Moderate (Tapanoeli-oriented organ)” (November 1920), “Moderate” (March 1922), “Liberal, Mandailing-oriented” (August 1922 – May 1926), and “Liberal” (September 1926 – September 1929).²²¹ Its editors were Soetan Parlindoengan (1918 – March 1922), and Mangaradja Ihoetan (August 1922 – September 1929). *Benih Mardeka* was also a Medan-based paper and was categorized as “General” paper (1918), “Radical Sarekat Islam” (1919 – July 1923), and “Radical Sarekat Islam, Loyal” (October 1923). The editors were Moh. Joenoes (1918), Abd. Moeis (1919), Moh. Joenoes (1920), R. K. Mangoenatmodjo (March 1922 – January 1923), and V. V. S. Manent (July 1923 – October 1923). *Perobahan* was a short-lived paper from Tandjoeng Karang, South Sumatra. It was published as a twice-weekly paper in 1919 and then as a weekly paper in 1920. *IPO* classified it as “Radical” (1919 – 1920), and its editors were M. Atje Padmawiganda (1919) and Radja Taka Mega (1920).

In short, it is safe to say that individual *IPO* staff followed their own reasoning and preference in determining which newspapers to be closely monitored. Ironically, *persdelict* articles of the Penal Code were designed to discipline individual journalists,

²²¹ The characterization that *IPO* provided regarding *Pewarta Deli* was tricky, because it had “Tapanoeli-oriented” and “Mandailing-oriented” (South Tapanoeli Batak). These two referred to basically the same people; the former pointed to the region, while the latter meant the dominant ethnic group in Tapanoeli region.

not newspapers as the medium. *IPO*'s coverage of *persdelict* cases was not systematic at all; rather, it depended on the staff that summarized and translated the vernacular press into Dutch. *IPO* was to provide the Dutch summary of vernacular press immediately after they were published, and as such the staffs were prone to make errors such as misspelling and typography as they had to prepare the reports in haste. The information *IPO* provided to the authorities was far from comprehensive, and the same was true of the list of newspapers it made. *IPO* had no clear editorial aim nor uniform method of making a summary. As I will show in Chapter 5, although it had a political mission, Balai Poestaka as the coordinator of *IPO* did not carry out its survey of the press in an organized way and therefore *IPO* itself failed to foresee the political dynamics of the Indies.

However, *persdelict* cases occurred many times between the 1910s and the 1930s. Journalists' reactions differed from time to time, which uncovered the inner workings of the Penal Code and the authorities that implemented the law, as my three cases below will illustrate.

The Case of Semaoen

Semaoen is generally remembered as the first head of PKI, leader of the radical wing of SI, and the first full-time propagandist. His words and deeds attracted members and followers of SI, as well as the attention of administrators of the Indies state, even though he was only in his late teens and early twenties when he became active in politics.

Semaoen was born as son of a state railway (*Staats Spoor Maatschapij*) employee in 1899, in Tjeramalang, Modjokerto, East Java, and at the age of six he

entered the Dutch Elementary School (*Hollandsch Lagere School*) in Soerabaja.²²² At the age of thirteen, he passed the entrance examination for becoming a lower government officer (*kleinambtenaar*). While going to school, Semaoen worked at the state railway company and joined its trade union. He soon distinguished himself in the union movement and in 1913 became member of the Soerabaja branch of SI.

In 1915 Semaoen joined the Indies Social Democratic Association (*Indische Sosiaal Democratische Vereniging*, ISDV), which had been established by the Dutch socialist H. J. F. M. Sneevliet in the previous year.²²³ Sneevliet decided to leave the Netherlands due to his radical political activities, and he came to Soerabaja in February 1913 to work as an editor for *De Soerabajaasch Handelsblad* (Soerabaja's Commercial Newspaper).²²⁴ Before founding ISDV, Sneevliet moved to Semarang (the third largest city in Java), joined the Association for Railway and Tramway Personnel (*Vereeniging voor Spoor-en Tramweg Personeel*, VSTP), and accepted the job as editor for the local paper *De Volharding* (Perseverance).²²⁵ In May 1914, Sneevliet established a branch of ISDV in Soerabaja. As its initial activities were limited, the association was little more than a debating society for Dutch socialists. The principal political activity of ISDV from 1915 until 1916 was the campaign – carried out by its organ *Het Vrije Woord* (The Free Word) – to support and organize rallies for Mas Marco Kartodikromo, then incarcerated due to *persdelict*. Sneevliet believed that trade unions could improve the working conditions of laborers and negotiate higher salaries. No doubt the influence and leadership of Sneevliet

²²² Semaoen's career is based on Ruth T. McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1965), *passim*; Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*, *passim*.

²²³ Sneevliet's career is based on McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*; Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*; John Ingleson, *In Search of Justice: Workers and Unions in Colonial Java, 1908-1926* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

²²⁴ VSTP was established in Semarang in November 1908 as the oldest trade union in the Indies. Ingleson, *In Search of Justice*, pp. 74-86.

²²⁵ Ingleson, *In Search of Justice*, p. 78.

penetrated into both VSTP and ISDV, and resulted in an expansion of activities throughout Java.

Sneevliet's socialist ideas attracted Semaoen, and he joined both ISDV and VSTP. Semaoen learned the basic ideas and strategies of Marxism together with Darsono, who also became one of the native leaders of the communist movement in the Indies. After Semaoen became a full-time propagandist of VSTP, its membership grew from 2,292 in January 1915 to 4,909 in December 1916, and eventually to 7,600 in June 1918.²²⁶ Semaoen moved to Semarang in 1916, taking a leadership role at the SI and VSTP there, and practiced such novel political strategies as trade unionism and strikes. In May 1917, in place of Moehammad Joesoef, he took over the leadership of SI's movement in Semarang. Along with political organizing, Semaoen edited and contributed articles to left-wing Malay language newspapers. *Si Tetap* (The Constant) and *Sinar Djawa* (Gleam of Java), which changed its name to *Sinar Hindia* in May 1918, which became organs of SI Semarang and VSTP. *Sinar Hindia* published 500 copies for each issue and was circulated in Semarang as well as major cities in Java such as Batavia, Bandoeng, Soerakarta, Jogjakarta, and Soerabaja. Articles by editors published in *Sinar Hindia* often drew charges of press offence. Semaoen himself was jailed several times due to *persdelict*.

Under Semaoen's leadership, the Semarang branch of SI also expanded its membership, growing from 1,700 in 1916 to more than 20,000 in the following year.²²⁷ From late 1917 until early 1918, Semaoen organized a series of successful strikes. Strikes emerged as one of the most effective political methods because their results were immediate and readily visible; if successful, the participants were able to obtain substantial concessions. Therefore, strikes attracted large numbers of laborers

²²⁶ McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, p. 23.

²²⁷ McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, pp. 137, 407; Ingleson, *In Search of Justice*, p. 231.

and peasants, and became a major political idiom for the movement. 1918 and 1919 were even labeled “the age of strikes” (*zaman pemogokan*), because organizing trade unions and launching strikes were relatively successful.²²⁸ The year also saw the banishment of several leading Dutch socialists from the Indies, and thereafter Semaoen took over the leadership of ISDV movement. By introducing strikes and organizing trade unions in the service of the movement, Semaoen attempted to replace the SI’s principal ideas of “progress” (*madjoe*) and “Islam” with “liberation” (*merdika*) and “equality and solidarity” (*sama rata sama rasa*).

Semaoen emerged as a rising star among the indigenous movement (*pergerakan*) leaders. He was however different from other leaders of the time. First, the anti-colonial/capitalist movement was already established when Semaoen joined it. Original SI leaders like O. S. Tjokroaminoto and Mas Marco Kartodikromo were the movement’s founders and needed to devote themselves to its formation. Semaoen’s contribution was his success in expanding it. Second, Semaoen started his career as a full-time propagandist for the trade union movement. This also distinguished him from Tjokroaminoto and Mas Marco, who began their careers as journalists and then turned into full-time movement leaders. Third, Semaoen learned the ideology and know-how of the movement from Sneevliet, who, as noted earlier, was a well-known Dutch socialist, a skilled trade union propagandist and party activist. Semaoen mastered socialist philosophy as well as novel movement methods such as trade union, boycott, and strike.

As he rose as a propagandist and movement leader, in 1919 Semaoen was charged with *persdelict* for an article published in *Sinar Hindia* under his editorship. The *IPO* citation of this case is as follows:

²²⁸ Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*, pp. 109-116.

SINAR-HINDIA 15 March 1919 No. 52

PERSDELICT SEMAOEN

Included is a report of the press offence trial of Semaoen at the *Landraad* on March 12, 1919, relating that he will be imprisonment for 2 months. In connection with this, it is noted that Semaoen will be taken into custody.

Immediately after this report, there is an announcement about the release on March 25 of a “red book” entitled “Semaoen’s Persdelict.”

Contents: a. Report concerning *Landraad*; b. Semaoen’s defence.²²⁹

The article for which Semaoen was tried was Sneevliet’s essay entitled “*Kelaparan dan pertjoendjoekan koeasa*” (Hunger and the demonstration of power). As the editor, Semaoen had translated and published it in the November 16, 1918 edition of *Sinar Hindia*. His subsequent trial due to this article was also reported in *Sinar Hindia* and then published in the form of a book in 1919, as announced in the same newspaper and cited in *IPO*.²³⁰ Reports of the trial provided important lessons for the press and activist communities as well as political messages for Semaoen’s audience. The court trial was essentially a formal occasion consisting of a series of questions and answers, but once the court proceedings were printed and circulated as a book, they became a reading material for public consumption. By being featured in trial reports, on the one hand, journalists and activists could expose their “victimization” at the hands of an unjust ruler, the injustices that colonized people must endure, and their courage and steadfastness in the face of such ordeals. By reading such reports, on the other hand, the audience could reconstruct the court scene and, from arguments advanced by the

²²⁹ “Persdelict Semaoen,” *Sinar Hindia*, No. 52 (March 15, 1919) in *IPO*, No. 11 (1919) in secret mail report 193x/19.

²³⁰ Semaoen, *Persdelict Semaoen* (Semarang: Sarikat-Islam Semarang, 1919).

journalist or activist, learned more about the workings of the legal, administrative, and economic systems in the Indies.

The promised “red book” gives us the details. At 8:05 o’clock in the morning on March 12, 1919, at the *Landraad* in Semarang, the trial of Semaoen’s *persdelict* case began. There was a separate court and legal codes for Europeans, but the *Landraad* was the lowest court for the indigenous population. For Semaoen’s case, there were three main judges consisting of Mr. A. S. Block serving as President, and Prawitohadinoto and Koesnoen each as member. Local leader Moechtar and three chief judges Djojomihardjo, Griffier, and Soedirman were also present at the trial.

The normal procedure opened the trial; the accused was asked to identify his profession and his local address. Semaoen was then 21 years old and working as propagandist and editor for the VSTP in Semarang. But when the chief prosecutor [*djaksa*] read the grounds of accusation, the atmosphere in the room quickly changed. When asked if he understood the substance of the accusation, Semaoen instead poked fun at his mispronunciation. He pointed out, “I have to say that the chief prosecutor was not very clear because for the word ‘*memikirkan*’ (to think) he read ‘*memikinkan*’ (to make).”²³¹ And in this case the word ‘*memikirkan*’ has a significant meaning.”²³² The president and the two members smiled at this, likely because they understood Semaoen’s swipe.

The trial began with question and answer between the president and the accused. The judges faced a tough challenge from the outset, because Semaoen refused to admit the charges he was accused of – the publication of Sneevliet’s article under Semaoen’s editorship. Because Sneevliet now lived outside the jurisdiction of

²³¹ The correct spelling of Malay should be “*membikinkan*” instead of “*mimikinkan*.” But this kind of misspelling often happened in colonial days.

²³² Semaoen, *Persdelict Semaoen*, p. 1. The original text reads, “saja maoe kata bahwa toean Hoofd-Djaksa membatja koerang terang sebab perkataan “memikirkan” ia batja “memikinkan” sedang ini perkataan memikirkan besar sekali artinja dalam ini perkara.”

the Netherlands Indies, he could not be held accountable; the authorities thus regarded the publication of the article as Semaoen's responsibility.

In his defence Semaoen insisted that Sneevliet asked him to translate the article into Malay and publish it in *Sinar Hindia* with an agreement that the responsibility was entirely Sneevliet's. Upon receiving the original article in Dutch, he told the court, he had taken it home, read it several times in order to understand it thoroughly, pondered how to translate it, and weighed the consequences of its publication. He took his translation to the printer anyway and the piece was published on November 16, 1918, with an accompanying editorial arguing that the article was not "dangerous" (*bahaya*). It was signed as authored by Sneevliet, which was unproblematic under normal circumstances, as he was an assistant of and frequent contributor to the paper.

Then came questions regarding the content of the article. The first point of contention was whether or not the article was intended to sway soldiers not to obey their commanders.²³³

President: Was the article intended so that soldiers disobey commands?

Semaoen: No. It was only intended so that soldiers do not kill people so easily.

P: In that case, if soldiers were being ordered to kill, so that they refuse?

²³³ Semaoen, *Persdelict Semaoen*, p. 2. The original text is as follows.

P: Itoe karangan maksoednja soepaja soldadoe mogok perintah?

S: Tidak, hanya bermaksoed soepaja soldadoe djangan gampang memboenoeh orang.

P: Djadi kalau soldadoe disoeroeh memboenoeh soepaja djangan soeka?

S: Tidak begitoe; toean President barangkali soedah dengar bahwa baroe baroesan ini di Flores soldadoe di lepaskan begitoe sadja dengan di persanggoepi premie f 2.50 boeat satoe satoenja orang jang ia boenoeh sebab ia *sangka* brontak. Ketarik olih itoe premie soldadoe bisa memboenoeh ngawoer sadja, asal dapat itoe premie. Saja koeatir kalau disini rajat brontak djoega ada atoeran begitoe dan ada pemboenoehan mengawoer, sedang soldadoe tidak oesah boenoeh tetapi tjoekoep menangkap.

P: Di soeroeh memboenoeh tetapi menangkap, itoe toch mogok perintah memboenoeh.

S: Tidak, sebab tidak di perintah siapa orang mesti di boenoeh. Bisa djoega orang jang tidak salah apa apa kliroe diboenoeh. Dari itoe saja bilang "djangan gampang memboenoeh."

- S: Not so, Mr. President. Perhaps you have heard that recently in Flores soldiers were given permission to kill freely for a reward of f 2.50 for every person they killed whom they suspected to be a rebel. Because of this reward, soldiers killed randomly, just to get rewards. I am worried if there is a rebellion here, this kind of rule will apply and there will be random killing where soldiers do not need to kill but only to make arrest.
- P: If they were being ordered to kill, but they only arrest, it means they disobey the authorities.
- S: Not really, because the command did not say who needed to be killed. Innocent people could be mistakenly killed. Because of that, I say, “Don’t kill so easily.”

The second point being raised concerned the word “*menipu*” (to deceive). Although Sneevliet wrote the original article, Semaoen appears to understand the argument well. His answers indicated that it was the capitalist class who deceived the people. His class-based logic explained how the sugar factory and local indigenous bureaucrats collaborated to deceive factory workers and local peasants.²³⁴

²³⁴ The following dialogue can be found on pages 2-4. The original text is as follows:

- P: Dalam itoe karangan ada perkata’an “menipoe.” Siapa menipoe?
 S: Fabriek goela, orang orang atau klas kaoem oeang.
 P: Karangan menjeboetkan pemerintah wakilnja kaoem oeang jang menipoe, djadi kamoe menghina pemerintah?
 S: Betoel pemerintah wakilnja kaoem oeang.
 P: Djadi kamoe mengakoe pemerintah terhina?
 S: Tidak...
 P: En kamoe mengakoe betoel...?
 S: Toean president. Disini ada salah mengerti; saja bilang: Betoel pamerintah wakilnja kaoem oeang dan betoel kaoem oeang fabriek (goela oepama) menipoe. Saja bilang jang sebetoel betoelnja, djadi boekan perkara penghina’an, tetapi perkara kabeneran.
 P: Boekti?
 S: Fabriek goela memberi oeang presen (premie) pada loerah boeat saban saban baoe tanahnja orang desa jang disewakan. Loerah menggoenakan kekoeasaännja boeat paksa haloes soepaja tanah disewakan, sebab ia tjari presen.

P: In that article there is the word “*menipu*” (to deceive). Who deceived?

S: The sugar factory, the rich.

P: The article says that the government represents the rich who deceive, it means you insult the government?

S: It is true that government represents the rich.

P: So you acknowledge that the government is being insulted.

S: No...

P: But you acknowledge, right...?

S: Mr. President, there is a misunderstanding here. I said: it is true that the government represents the rich, and it is true that the factory

P: Toch loerah jang menipoe?

S: Betoel, tetapi fabriek tahoe hal hal ini en toch beri premie terseboet dengan pengetahoean itoe ia berboeat tipoean, dengan tegas: Fabriek menipoe haloes haloesan. Ada doea matjam tipoean, haloes dan kasar, menipoe sendiri dengan langsoeng atau dengan perantaraän, direct atau indirect.

P: Ada lain boekti tipoean?

S: Ada, seperti menjahabat ambtenaar boemipoetera, tjontonja kalau saja tidak loepa Assistent Wedono Petaroekan diberi pindjam f 10,000 oleh fabriek dan karena persahabatan itoe ambtenaar B. B. bisa goenakan kekoeasaännja boeat mendapatkan tanah.

P: Kalau tipoean orang desa toch mesti berasa roegi. Berapa sewa tanah?

S: f 40 sampai f 70 satoe baoe. Itoe roegi.

P: Berapa hadsilnja orang desa dari sawahnja?

S: Loepa, tetapi saja bisa hitoengkan disini kalau toean president soeka. Bagaimana djoega, orang desa dapt hadsil lebih dari tanahnja kalau dibandingkan dengan pesewaän pada Fabriek.

P: Ja, orang desa toch haroes tida soeka roegi?

S: Kalah sama loerah, sebab ini kepala bisa mendjadi bentji pada pemogok penjewa dan orang dessa laloe gampang di fitnah, oepama dimintakan rol atau lain lain sebab pagernja tidak dilaboer d.s.b. Kalau toean president tahoe betoel hal ichwalnja di dessa, toean bisa tahoe ini semoea. Saja ada pernah beroemah di dessa.

P: Dalam karangan terseboet pamerintah dihina sebab dikata: *diperingatkan dengan keras*, masih sadja beloem menambah bekal makanan di Hindia! Penghina'ankah ini?

S: Boekan, tetapi perkara sabetoelnja.

P: Boekti?

S: Permoela'an tahoen 1918 soedah ada gerakan² boeat minta pada pamerintah soepaja tanaman teboe dikoerangi biar bekal makanan bisa ditambah.

P: Apa lagi.

S: Banjak beloem ditoeroeti, seperti soepaja pamerintah memaksa peroesaha'an peroesaha'an kapal menoeroenkan ongkos kapal besar boeat moeatan beras dari lain negeri. Tetapi hal hal ini nanti saja terangkan dalam saja poenja soerat pleidooi (soerat perlawanan).

people deceived. What I said is only factual; it has nothing to do with insult, but only the reality.

P: Do you have proof?

S: The sugar factory gives reward to village heads (*lurah*) for every piece of land they rent from villagers. So the head of the village uses his power to subtly force the villagers to give up their land and lease it out, because he wants the reward.

P: So you are saying the head of the village deceives?

S: Yes, but the factory also knows about this, and yet they continue to reward such deception, which means, the factory indirectly deceives. There are two kinds of deceptions: subtly and crudely, to deceive directly or by using a medium, that is indirectly.

P: Do you have any other proof of deception?

S: Yes, those who hold the position of indigenous bureaucrats for instance, if I remember correctly, the Assistant Wedono of Petaroekan²³⁵ was given a loan of f10,000 by the factory, and because of this relationship the civil bureaucrat (BB) can use his power to obtain land.

P: If you say this is a deception, the villagers must feel the loss. How much is the rent for the land?

S: f 40 to f 70 per *baoe*. This is a loss.

P: How much is the yield from farming?

²³⁵ Although Semaoen said Petaroekan, the book identifies the bureaucrat as the Assistant Wedono of Taman Pernalang. Semaoen, *Persdelict Semaoen*, p. 3, footnote.

- S: I forget, but I can calculate it here if Mr. President wishes. In any case, the villagers should get more from the land compared to leasing it out to the factory.
- P: Yes, the villagers do not want to lose, right?
- S: They lost because of the village heads, and because of this, the village heads dislike those who refuse to lease out their land, and the villagers can be accused falsely quite easily, for instance they were cited for not painting their fences and things like that. If Mr. President learns exactly what is going on in the villages, he will know everything. I have lived in the village.
- P: In that article, the government is being insulted with a description: *a serious warning*, [the government] still cannot realize food sufficiency in the Indies! Isn't this an insult?
- S: No, that is only the truth.
- P: Proof?
- S: Beginning in the year 1918 there has been a movement to request the government to reduce the planting of sugar cane so that the people can grow food.
- P: What else?
- S: There are many still not being accepted to, for instance that the government forces the shipping companies to reduce the tariff to ship rice from other countries. But this kind of thing I can explain in my defence statement.

Semaoen's answer appears to impress the president. He pointed out the facts of the case and continued to deflect the accusation of insulting the government. Semaoen detailed how the rich – the sugar factory – mediated by local bureaucrats customarily

deceived villagers, but made a point to specify the indigenous village-heads and an Assistant Wedono as the immediate perpetrators. At one point the president asked, “Where did you go to school?” because he knew that Semaoen had minimum formal education, and yet could attract many followers and made logical arguments citing concrete evidence. Semaoen answered, “Dutch Elementary School,” adding that he did not go to school beyond it, but studied on his own. He also told the court that he used to be a train clerk and passed the test to join station committee. After working as train clerk for four or five years, in 1916 he became the propaganda editor of VSTP Semarang. Semaoen professed to become attracted to ISDV when in 1913 he read an article in *Soerabajaasche Handelsblad* about a gathering for the founding of ISDV. At the time of the trial, he was a member of the top committee of ISDV. He had asked the Semarang branch of ISDV to turn Sneevliet’s article into pamphlets, and published 3,000 to 3,500 copies of it.

Through the dialogue, Semaoen demonstrated that he always supported those who were weak and exploited by the authorities. His aversion to abuses of power reminds us of Tirto back in the 1900s, as I have described in Chapter 2. The difference however lies in the fact that Tirto had enjoyed political patronage by the Governor-General, while Semaoen learned political tactics from his Dutch socialist guru, Sneevliet. Unlike Tirto, Semaoen could mobilize peasants and laborers who had suffered economic hardship. By introducing strikes and demonstrations that could bring immediate results, Semaoen showed his followers that the weak could actually fight against the authorities and the capitalists.

After the obligatory question and answer session, six witnesses were called in. They were H. W. Dekker (the chairperson of ISDV Semarang), H. M. Waworoentoe (the director of printing house of *Sinar Hindia*), Tjokromidjojo (the director administrator of *Sinar Hindia*), Karlian (the head of typesetter of *Sinar Hindia*),

Soelatin (the proofreader of *Sinar Hindia*), and Kasan (the distributor of *Sinar Hindia*). The questions for these witnesses concerned printing-related matters.

After this, it was Semaoen's turn to give his defence statement (*pledooi*), which he read for approximately one hour. His statement firmly made a case that the accused article did not break the law, and then went on to criticize the ambiguity of the "hate-sowing articles," which were the basis of the accusation.

Mr. President and members of the court,

I am truly surprised that I am accused of violating articles 154 and 155 [of the Penal Code], because I have proven prior to this that the contents of the [newspaper] article in question are completely clear and did not cross the limit. And Mr. Chairman, where exactly is the limit of such violations, because it is not mentioned whatsoever in the articles, and to this day the government has never announced where exactly is the limit by which an article can be said to have crossed or have not crossed the law?

For a journalist, he cannot write even one article without being forced to see the specter of *persdelict* and they are happy if they can write with evidences to support their writings. They must not lie or cover up the truth that needs to be exposed for public interest, and if they cover it up, this means that they are doing something evil and manipulate public interest, which of course is not desired by the government and the law; so if a person who is in the right is being punished, this means that the punishment encourages lies, which is dangerous for public interest and is cultivating a very bad aspect of humanity. My surprise has grown steadily to the point that I am completely confused and can only say "Oh my God" whenever I think about the content of articles 154 and 155 of the *strafwetboek* which in Malay translates into

“*mengloearkan perasaan bermoesoehan, bentji atau penghinaan*” (to express feelings of enmity, hatred, or contempt). How should I know if the article by comrade Sneevliet has expressed such feelings? Who knows what he felt when he wrote it? Was it hatred? Was it sadness? Was it surprise? In short, only God knows what it was, and perhaps You Gentlemen here don’t know either, what kind of feelings comrade Sneevliet had at the time [of composing] was expressing. If I were the one writing about the reality the way comrade Sneevliet wrote, then I would express feelings of sadness, thinking about the burden and suffering of the people who have been devoured by the rich. So it wasn’t hatred or contempt (*penghinaan*) or quarrel, but a feeling of sadness that I would be expressing.

According to this article of law, You Gentlemen of this court, need to know the author’s feeling when he wrote [the article], and you can ask comrade Sneevliet if at that time he was expressing hatred and the likes, and if he says no, who and how can [you] prove otherwise! I know comrade Sneevliet as a leader who has pity for whoever is the victim of exploitation and oppression, and it saddens him to see repression; but how and where he expresses hatred, I still do not know. In making criticism or analysis with regard to the government and the rich, he is always cool-headed, he did not use his feelings.

In short, Mr. Chairman, I wholeheartedly request that Your Honor do not make assumptions from this article on what the writer was feeling, and also because the articles of law that I mentioned above are very arbitrary, so I ask that this case not be decided and especially erroneously decided, because nobody can witness or prove what exactly the feeling that the author was expressing.

With regard to the [newspaper] *article* itself, it cannot express any feeling because it is only a *dead* thing.

I think I have given enough proof that the article does not violate any part of articles 154 and 156 of the *strafwetboek* and now I will continue with proofs that the [newspaper] article was not trying to influence the soldiers of the army to disobey commands of their superiors.²³⁶

²³⁶ Semaoen, *Persdelict Semaoen*, pp. 18-20.

Toen President dan toean lid-lid!

Soenggoehpoen saja hairan bahwa saja ditoedoe melanggar fatsal 154 dan 155 karena sebagi saja boektikan diatas semoea isinja karangan jang mendjadi perkara ini senjata njatanja, dan tida melanggar batas. Dan lagi toean Voorzitter, manakah batasnja itoe pelanggaran sebab tida terseboet sama sekali dalam itoe fatsal dan hingga sekarang belum di peroemoemkan oleh pemerintah dimana batas-batsnja karangan jang melanggar dan tida melanggar.

Boeat soeatoe Journalist soenggoehpoen tida bisa toelis satoe karangan sadja, maka terpaksa ia meliat gendroewonja persdelict dan marika soedah senang kalau mengarang dengan bisa mengadakan boekti boektinja kabenarannya toelisan. Merika tida boleh berboeat djoesta atau menoetoep kaberaan jang ia sangka perloe diboeka sebab goena kaperloen oemoem dan kalau ia sampai menoetoep itoe tentoelah akan berboeat djahat dan seolah olah mempermainkan keperloean oemoem, hal jang mana tentoe tida dikehendaki oleh pemerinth dan fatsal-fatsal terseboet, dan kalau orang poenja kabenaran dihoekoem tentoelah penghokoeman itoe menjoroeh djoesta dan berbahaja sekali boeat kaperloean oemoem serta mendidik perasaan menoesia jang sangat djahat. Heran saja bertambah bertambah besar lagi sehingga beberapa hari tinggal gedek dalam kebingoengan sambil menjeboet-menjeboet “Astagafir Allah,” kalau saja memfikirkan boeninja fatsal 154 dan 155 dari strafwetboek dimana terseboet “tot uiting komen van gevoelens van vijandschap, haat of minaching” dan bahasa melajoe “mengloearkan perasaan bermoesoehan, bentji atau penghinaan.” Bagaimana saja bisa taoe dari toelisannya saudara Sneevliet bahwa ia soeda MENGLOEARKAN PERASAAN, siapa taoe dia poenja rasa koetika ia toelis itoe, rasa bentjikah, rasa soesahkah, rasa hairankah, wah pendek hanja Toehan Allah jang mengatahoei itoe, dan barangkali Padoeka toean-toean disini djoega tida bisa taoe, RASA apa. Kalau saja jang menoelis kabenaran-kabenaran sebagi saudara Sneevliet, toelis diatas soenggoehpoen saja MENGLOEARKAN RASA SENDIH HATI, sebab memfikirkan kabერთanja dan kasoelahannya rajat jang djadi makanannya kaoem wang. Djadi boekannya rasa bentji atau penghinaan atau persateroan, tetapi perasaan soesah jang saja keloearken.

Menoeroet fatsal wet itoe toean-toean jang pegang pengadilan mau taoe rasanja sipenoelis waktoe menoelis, dan boleh tanjak pada saudara Sneevliet apakah diwaktoe itoe ia kloearkan rasa bentji dan sebaginja, dan kalau ia bilang tida siapa dan bagimanan tjaranja memboektiekan atau menjaksikan sebaliknya! Saja kenal saudara Sneevliet sebagi soeatoe pemimpin jang hanja mempoenjai rasa hati belas kasian kepada siapa sadja jang terperas dan tertindas, dan soesahlah ia kalau ia melihat penindasan dan, perasaan itoe, tetapi di mana tempatnja dan diwaktoe apa ia kloearkan rasanja bentji itoe sampai sekarang saja belum mengatahoei. Didalam memboeat critiek atau pertimbangan berhadapan dengan pemerintah dengan kaoem wang selamanya ia pakai ia poenje INGATAN DINGIN (koel verstand), tetapi tida pakai ia poenja RASA.

Pendek, toean voorzitter, saja moehoen dengan sangat-sangat soepaja dari karangan itoe padoeka pengadilan djangan sampai kira kira sadja atau menoedjoem rasa apa jang

Semaoen went on to point out the unfairness of the colonial legal system. He pointed out the discrimination involved in a legal system that tried native people at the native court or the *Landraad*, while Europeans were tried at the *Raad van Justitie*. This dichotomy in the Indies legal system was of course well known to the judges. Why, then, did Semaoen need to make this point? In a sense it was obvious. Arguably Semaoen was making a statement for the benefit of the audience present at the trial and his readers outside the courtroom, not for the judges in front of him. Most important was his “assessment” that such separate courts were unjust. Semaoen had prepared his defence with multiple audiences in mind – the judges, his sympathizers who were among the audience, as well as the readers of *Sinar Hindia*. He thus went on,

Previously I have used the word “hopefully” because even though *essentially* the *Raad van Justitie* and the *Landraad* are the same, “the way cases are being tried” or “the technique of trying cases” in front of the *Landraad* is different from that in front of the *Raad van Justitie*.

The difference in “techniques” can exert influence in such a way that the accused in front of the *Landraad* may feel actually in a less advantageous position compared than if he were in front of the *Raad van Justitie*. I have mentioned above, that the prosecutor of the *Landraad* is not required to present formally the charges, and the punishment requested in front of the

sipenoelis soedah keloearkan dan djoega dari sebab katentoean dalam fatsal-fatsal wet terseboet diatas begitoe adjaib, sangatlah permoehoenan saja soepaja dipoetoes jang ini perkara tida boleh dipoetoes dan tida bisa dipoetoes salah, sebab tida ada jang menjaksikan atau memboektikan, atau kira-kirakan perasaän apa jang penoelis soedah kloearkannja.

Adapoen *karangannja* sendiri tida bisa mengloearkan rasa, kerena itoe karangan *mati* belaka.

Sampai disinilah saja kira soedah tjoekoep memboektikan bahwa itoe karangan sama sekali tida melanggar katentoean-katentoean dalam fatsal 154 dan 155 dari strafwetboek dan sekarang saja akan melandjoetkan boekti-boekti jang itoe karangan sama sekali tida mengasoet soldadoe-soldadoe dari balatentara boeat mogok diatas prentah-prentah dari pembesarnja.

accused and the public (*openbare*), whereas in the *Raad van Justitie* this officer is obligated to do so.²³⁷

Secondly, in the *Raad van Justitie*, the judge is not allowed to punish the defendant on charges other than those cited in his “letter of summons” (*surat panggilan*) and “requisitoir” of the Prosecutor, whereas in the *Landraad* he *can* find other excuses after the accused or defendant has expressed his or her statement of defence to contradict the original charges. So it looks like the second charges have been brought up only after the original charges *have been rebutted without any further rebuttal allowed for the accused*.

So I hope, Your Honors, of this *Landraad* will not so act in my case.

Other than that I am also adding this further information, so that Your Honors can take into consideration how difficult is it for me to make this rebuttal letter:

Although I never thought that I would be brought to the *Landraad* on the 6th of February 1919, because I remember Chief Prosecutor (*Hoofd Jaksa*) saying to me at the time when I was being asked about the case of an article by S(ubroto) M(atirogo), that even though the *Landraad had the power to allow only three days* between the delivery of the summons and the trial in front of the *Landraad*, usually in this type of cases, more than fourteen days are usually given between the summons and the presentation of self [at the court], so that the accused has enough time to prepare evidence to prove that he is not guilty of the charges. But what happened [in my case] was not like that. Now I have to come before you, but the letter of summons came on

²³⁷ What Semaoen was implying here is that by not reading the formal accusation, the accused sometimes did not know what the precise charge was.

Friday dated the 31st of January 1919, at 8 o'clock in the evening, so I have had only five days to prepare evidence that I am not guilty. In the case of Sneevliet and Dekker, they were given more than fourteen days by the *Raad van Justitie*, so in this case the difference between the *Raad van Justitie* and the *Landraad* is very obvious; since we the native journalists must report to the *Landraad*, we are already at a disadvantage compared to Dutch journalists who report to the *Raad van Justitie*. This unfairness is magnified if you take into consideration that according to *Nieuws van den Dag* and other Dutch newspapers, Dutch journalists have better knowledge and intelligence compared to indigenous journalists. Yet it seems like our justice system here assumes that we indigenous journalists are smarter than Dutch journalists [by granting lesser time to prepare for our defence]. Whichever is correct, it's up to the public to decide. But two things are clear: if we are stupid, then the way the government allots time as I mentioned above is very unfair compared to the amount of time given to Dutch journalists; or, if the government considers the present system is already fair, then newspapers like *Nieuws van den Dag* and others must be trying to plant seeds of hatred between the natives and people of other groups by insulting indigenous journalists, in which case the government must punish the editors of *Nieuws van den Dag* and other Dutch newspapers. But if this is not true, then it means the court is unfair.

Mr. President! I brought up this issue so that Your Honors of the *Landraad* can take into consideration that such a short time reduces the evidence I could gather to prove my innocence, and if you listen to my defence, I hope you take into consideration this lack of time. The time was already short, but the way the letter of summons was delivered to me also made it more difficult to prepare a defence against the accusation, which in

my opinion is without any basis. While Dutch journalists like Dekker and Sneevliet and others received copies of the letters of summons, stating the exact charges, indigenous journalists, like I on that Friday, do not receive a copy of that summons. Instead, Mr. Assistant Wedono read it in front of me. But my case is so complicated that one hour was spent just to read the letter, so that by the end I had forgotten [the exact charges]. In addition to the fact that the letter was being read in front of me at my house, I was sick. So up to now it is not clear to me on what grounds I am accused, making it even harder for me to prepare an appropriate defence.

It can be argued that my case has been postponed to this day (12 March), but *the reason it was delayed was because I was sick*.

I am sick, and up to now you can see that my hand is still being bandaged, that I am still not fully recovered, that I cannot prepare the letter of defence to the best of my ability, because my mind is still being burdened by my ailment.

So I hope this is taken into consideration, and if there is any explanation that is not yet clear, I hope Your Honor would ask so I can clarify it.

Above I have explained the difference of “techniques” in front of the *Raad van Justitie* and the *Landraad*, so that Your Honors of the *Landraad* here can neutralize or remove these disadvantages with a fair decision.²³⁸

²³⁸ Semaoen, *Persdelict Semaoen*, pp. 27-29.

Diatas saja soeda kata “moega-moega” sebab meskipoen *dasarnja* memberi pengadilan dari Raad van Justitie dan Laadraad ada sama, tetapi “tjaranja oeroes perkara” atau “technieknja oeroesan perkara” di moeka Landraad ada lain dari pada dimoeka Justitie.

Ini perbedaannja “tjara” atau “techniek” bisa berpengaroeh begitoe roepa, sehingga pesakitan dimoeka Landraad bisa berasa di roegikan dalam perkaranja kalau ditimbang dengan pesakitan jang misti mengadap dimoeka Justitie.

Tadi saja soedah tjeritakan, bahwa toean Djaksa sebagai Officier van Justitie dimoeka Landraad tida diwadjibkan mengadakan “soerat toedoehan dan permintaän oekoem” dimoeka

orang banjak dan dimoea pesakitan (openbaar), sebaliknya dimoea Justitie toean Officier van Justitie *diwadjibkannya*.

Kedoea, oeroesan dimoea Raad van Justitie tida memperkenankan boeat Justitie mengoeoem pesakitan dengan alesan lain dari pada jang terseboet dalam “soerat panggilan” dan “requisitoir” dari Officier van Justitie poenja, sedang Landraad *boleh* tjari alesan lain “sesoedahnja” pesakitan didengar perlawanannja boeat membatalkan toedoeahan jang pertama. Saolah-olah toedoeahan jang kedoea jang di bikin baroe sesoedahnja perlawanan jang kesatoe *di tetapkan dengan tida pakai perlawanannja pesakitan*.

Moega moegalah padoeka Landraad dalam perkara saja ini tida berboeat begitoe.

Selain dari itoe saja mengatoerkan katrangan lagi sebagi di bawah ini, soepaja padoeka bisa menimbang kesoesahan hamba bikin soerat perlawanan:

Soenggoehpoen saja tida mengira bahwa doeloenja saja misti mengadap Landraad pada tanggal 6 Februari 1919, karena saja ingat perbilangannja toean Hoofddjaks di waktoe saja di tanjak perkaranja karangannja S(oebroto) M(atirogo), bahwa meskipoen Landraad *ada hak membri tempo tjoema 3 hari* di antaranja kadatangan panggilan dan pengadoean di moeka Landraad, biasanja di dalam perkara perkara seroea ini, begitoelah kata toean Hoofddjaks kepada pesakitan, diberi tempo lebih dari 14 hari antara panggilan dan pengadapan, sehingga pesakitan dapat tempo tjoekoep boeat mengadakan boekti-boekti bahwa ia tida berdosa sama sekali. Adapoen kedjadiannja tiada begitoe. Sekarang saja misti mengadap, tetapi panggilan datangnya pada hari Djoemahat tanggal 31 Januari 1919 djam 8 malam, sehingga saja hanja dapat tempo 5 hari boeat bersedia menoendjoekan jang saja tiada berdosa. Di dalam perkaranja Sneevliet dan Dekker merika diberi tempo lebih dari 14 hari oleh Justitie hingga di sini soedah kenteranlah perbeda’annja antara Justitie dan Landraad, sehingga kita kaoem Journalist Boemipoetra misti mengadap Landraad itoe soedah dapat pengadilan koerang dari pada Journalist Belanda jang misti mengadap di moeka Justitie. Perkara jang koerang adil ini tambah kelihatan besarnja kalau difikir bahwa menoeroet Nieuws van den Dag dan lain-lain soerat kabar belanda, Journalist Journalist bangsa belanda memoenjai tingkat pengataoen dan kapinteran lebih tinggi dari pada Journalist Boemipoetra. Tetapi roepa-roepanja pengadilan pamerintahan di sini seperti memandang jang kita Journalist Boemipoetra lebih tjerdik dari Journalist bangsa belanda. Mana jang betoel terserah pada fikirannja orang-orang diloea. Tetapi doea perkara jang terang: kalau kitaorang lebih bodo, maka tjaranja pemerintah memberi tempo sebagi diatas ada tida adil kalau dibandingkan dengan memberi tempo pada Journalist Boemipoetra; atau pemerintah menbilang soedah adil, maka soerat kabar Nieuws van den Dag dan lain-lain ternjata menanam binih perbentjian antara Boemipoetra dan lain-lain golongan pendoedoek dengan menghina Journalist Boemipoetra itoe, sehingga disini wadjiblah pemerintah mengoeoem Redacteur Nieuws van den Dag dan lain-lain soerat kabar belanda. Tetapi kalau tiada kedjadian mengoeoem tentoe lagilah teradjoenja pengadilan ada mendjoempelang berat sebelah belaka.

Toean President! Saja menoenjeoken hal2 di atas ini soepaja padoeka Landraad soeka menimbang, bahwa tempo jang sedikit itoe soedah mengoerangi boekti-boekti saja jang tiada berdosa dan kalau toean mendengarkan perlawanana saja ini, saja mengharap menimbang halnja kekoerangan ini tempo djoega. Tempo soedah koerang, tetapi bagi manakah tjaranja itoe soerat panggilan dihadapkan kepada saja, lagilah ternjata menjoesabkan saja boeat bikin perlawanan di atas toedoeahan jang sepandjang fikiran saja tiada beralesan belaka. Sedangnja Journalist bangsa belanda sebagi Dekker, Senevliet dan lain-lain dapat toeroenan dari soerat panggilan dimana terseboet perkara-perkara jang djadi toentoetan, tetapi kita Journalist Boemipoetra sebagi saja pada hari Djoemahat terseboet di atas tiada dapat toeroenan itoe dan hanja toean Assistant Wedono membatja dimoea saja itoe soerat jang di dalam perkara saja ini amat pandjang lebarnja sehingga habis satoe djam sahadjja sesoedahnja dibatja maka saja soedah loepa, ditambah lagi di waktoe itoe soerat di batja di moeka saja “diroemah saja,” saja masih merasakan sakit, dan hingga sekarang tiada taoe terang apakah jang didjadiakan boekti dalam penoedoeahan dosa saja, hal jang mana bikin tambah soesah boeat bikin perlawanan jang betoel.

After Semaoen's hour-long defense statement, Mr. Luijten, the defense lawyer, explained the reasons why the law could not be rightfully applied to Semaoen's case. They both requested that Semaoen be released from punishment. Subsequently, the public trial adjourned, and the *Landraad* continued the discussion on its own for roughly one hour. At one o'clock after lunch break, the trial was reopened and a decision read: 1) The article in question insulted the government (article 154 of *strafwetboek*), 2) It did not incite (try to influence) soldiers (article 160 of *strafwetboek*), and 3) A sentence of two months in prison for Semaoen. Semaoen was given 21 days to consider filing an appeal.

These excerpts of Semaoen's trial are as transcribed in the "red book." The trial was open to the public, but many observers were never able to enter the courtroom. Approximately a thousand people reportedly came to witness the trial. Semaoen was a popular leader and many had wanted to see what was going to happen to him, or how he was going to defend himself. When he came out from the courtroom, the crowd applauded and greeted him, but he was quickly escorted into the car by the police and taken home. For those who did not make it into the court, the newspaper prepared the book version of the trial proceedings, so readers could follow the exchanges between Semaoen and the President.

Four months after the trial, Semaoen commenced his jail term. He was imprisoned from July 24 until November 21, 1919. His prison term was extended because the authorities were troubled by his growing popularity and influence among

Alesan-alesan ini boleh dibantah bahwa perkara saja soedah moendoer sampai ini hari (12 Maart) tetapi *sebabnja moendoer jalah karena saja sakit*.

Sakit, dan sampai sekarang toean bisa liat dari tangan saja jang terboengkoes ini, bahwa saja belom semboeh betoel hingga koeranglah ketjakapan saja bikin soerat perlawanan, karena fikiran saja teroes meneroes masih diberati kesakitan ini. Djoega ini perkara soepaja mendjadikan timbangan dan kalau ada katerangan saja jang masih koerang terang, agar soepaja padoeka bisa tanja lagi boeat menerangkan lebih djelas.

Di atas saja soedah terangkan beda bedanja "techniek oeroesan" di moeka Justitie dan Landraad, sebab jang saja maksoedkan dengan itoe jalah: soepaja pandoeka Landraad di sini bisa "neutraliseeren" atau "mengilangkan" perbeda'an itoe dengan poetoesan jang adil sekali.

the people, even though originally he was sentenced to only two months.²³⁹ The day before he was moved to prison, he contributed an article to *Sinar Hindia* – “*Sampai ketemoe lagi*” (Till we meet again) – and when he was released he wrote “*KETOEMOE LAGI*” (We meet again), published on December 1, evidently to inform the readers of his release.²⁴⁰

During his four-month “internment” Semaoen conceived and wrote the original version of the novel “*Hikajat Kadiroen*” (The Story of Kadiroen). Originally published as a *feuilleton* between 1919 and October 1920 on the front page of *Sinar Hindia*, it was later published in book form in May 1920 by Kantoor PKI (PKI’s office). The novel is the earliest Malay novel about communism in the Indies, which uniquely combines the elements of communism, Islamism, and Javanese Hindu-Buddhist tradition.²⁴¹ *IPO* of 1920 described it as a tendentious novel (*tendenz roman*), since it contains a distinct political message and ideology.²⁴² One line from the content reads: “In the contemporary era, there is no other way to respect the people but through Communism, for this way is opened by Allah’s intention.”²⁴³

The Case of Parada Harahap: Translations of Press Law and the Newspaper Business

As a journalist contemporary with Semaoen’s, Parada Harahap (1899-1959) emerged as “The King of the Java Press,” in the late 1930s. The appellation was

²³⁹ Life in prison differed from place to place. In Padang, when Datoek Soetan Maharadja was imprisoned for one year due to press offence in 1919, he could enjoy some freedom, keeping in touch with family and friends, and getting meals from home almost on daily basis. “Persdelicten,” *Oetoesan Melajoe*, No. 252 (December 15, 1919) in *IPO* No. 52/1919.

²⁴⁰ *Sinar Hindia*, March 12, 1919 and December 1, 1919.

²⁴¹ For an analysis of *Hikajat Kadiroen*, Yamamoto Nobuto, “Reading and Placing Semaoen’s *Hikajat Kadiroen*: A Thought on Political Discourse and Institutional Politics in Early Indonesian Nationalism,” *Keio Journal of Politics*, No. 9 (1997), pp. 49-79; Hendrik Maier, “Geschreven in het licht en de gevangenis: de *Hikajat Kadiroen* van Semaoen,” in C. M. S. Hellwig and S. O. Robson (eds.), *A Man of Indonesian Letters: Essays in Honor of Professor A. Teeuw* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1986).

²⁴² *IPO*, 1920.

²⁴³ Semaoen, *Hikajat Kadiroen*, p. 121.

accorded to Harahap in a secret colonial document.²⁴⁴ In his capacity as a leading journalist, in 1924 he translated to his readers the colonial penal code regulating journalism from Dutch into Malay, and published it as a book entitled *Journalistiek: Pers-en Spreekdelictenboek* (Journalistic: A Book on Press and Speech Offences).²⁴⁵ *Persdelict* articles or hate-sowing articles were naturally the main topic in this book. But his explanation of the law and the way in which he presented it is quite different from Semaoen. His activities and understanding of the newspaper industry reflected the mood that prevailed in the business world of newspapers at the time, which somehow was quite detached from the world of activism in which Semaoen lived.

Born on December 15, 1899 in Pargaroetan, West Sumatra, Parada Harahap studied at the Teacher's Training School (*Kweekschool*) in Bukittinggi. At the age of 14 he began to work as a clerk with a rubber company in Pulau Perca, Pesisir Timoer, West Sumatra. From early on he showed great interest in newspapers, subscribing to the two major newspapers of Sumatra, *Pewart Deli* (Medan) and *Andalas* (Padang), and writing frequent letters to Soetan Parlindoengan, the editor-in-chief of *Pewart Deli*. In his autobiography, Harahap also recalls that he was moved by articles on plantation labor published in *Benih Merdeka*, whose editor-in-chief was Mohamad Samin. Between 1918 and 1921, he worked as editor of *Sinar Merdeka* in Padang Sidempuan and then as editor-in-chief of a Batak dialect *Poestaka* in Sibolga, while also devoting his time as leader of the SI's Padang Sidempuan branch.

At the age of 22 Harahap moved to Batavia. With a recommendation from a high *adat* (tradition) official and a noted Minangkabau journalist Datoek Temenggoeng he was able to get a position as editor at *Neratja*, the second most circulated newspaper in Batavia at that time after the Chinese-Malay daily *Sin Po*,

²⁴⁴ Mr. 988x/1938 in Vb. 20-1-39-F2.

²⁴⁵ Harahap, *Journalistiek*.

while regularly contributing articles to *Tjaja Hindia*. He learned much from the paper's editors such as Abdoel Moeis, Hadji Agoes Salim, and Djojosoediro. He also took Dutch lessons. A year later, in 1923, Harahap started to publish *Bintang Hindia*, first as a monthly journal and then as a weekly. For this periodical he worked as manager and began focusing on the business of publishing.²⁴⁶ *Bintang Hindia* brought Harahap success as an entrepreneur, which made it possible for him to launch daily *Bintang Timoer* in 1926. *Bintang Timoer* in turn also emerged as a big success, in part because it was assisted financially by the government – information that Harahap failed to disclose in his autobiography. He also claimed that *Bintang Timoer* was the most circulated daily in Java. Unfortunately, the Great Depression forced the termination of *Bintang Timoer* in 1931, as the government had to stop subsidizing it. When the economic situation improved in the middle of the 1930s, Parada Harahap returned to the press business and began publication of *Tjaja Timoer*.

Just as he started his publishing business with *Bintang Hindia* in 1924, Harahap published a book entitled *Journalistiek: Pers-en Spreekdelictenboek* (*Journalistic: A Book on Press and Speech Offences*). He begins the book's introduction by claiming that he is an experienced journalist and understands well the law regarding journalism as specified in the Penal Code.

The writer has witnessed many cases involving the press and speech offences (*spreekdelicten*) in this country, and himself has experienced 12 charges of press and speech offences, three of which have brought the writer to jail, for a total of 7 months.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ The first issue of *Bintang Hindia* was printed by the Neratja press, but the second issue onwards by de Unie.

²⁴⁷ Harahap, *Journalistiek*, p. 6.

Here Harahap mentions the fact that he was victimized by *persdelict* in 1919, when he was an editor of *Sinar Merdeka* in Padang Sidempuan. Then he goes on to say:

Hopefully this book can be of good use for gentlemen who work in the fields of journalism and politics, like a flashlight to illuminate the way forward, so they do not step on those innumerable thorns.²⁴⁸

Harahap suggests that by providing a Malay translation of the Penal Code relating to journalism, he could help prevent journalists from inadvertently violating the law and being punished for lack of knowledge.

This was the first book in Malay on journalism and the Penal Code articles of press and speech offences. It included chapters on journalistic ethics, freedom of the press, author's rights, sample cases of *persdelict*, sample cases of speech offences, the history of Malay press, and the history of journalism in the Indies. When it came to the section on legal matters, he gave his Malay translation of the legal articles first and then followed this with his explanation (*keterangan penoelis*) and analysis. He explained for instance that the press and speech offence law consisted of articles 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160 and 161, calling them the most infamous articles for journalists and proponents (*pengandjoer*) of free press in the Indies. These articles focus on expression in the press or in assembly that may stir up hatred (*kebentjiaan*) in the society, and thus, he notes, are aimed at maintaining public security and order (*keamanan*).

However, Harahap points out a fundamental problem of ambiguity in the terminology used in the articles, as for example in the lack of definition given for what constitutes "hatred." As Harahap notes, whether or not the Indies state should punish

²⁴⁸ Harahap, *Journalistiek*, pp. 6-7.

a person depends entirely on the extent to which the judge or prosecutor feels provoked (*uitlokking*), leaving authorities (*orang jang berkoeasa*) with large degree of freedom in deciding what words and deeds to construe as dangerous and inappropriate.

The odd thing is that the government was subsidizing his publishing business – the daily *Bintang Timoer*, as well as *Neratja*, where he worked as editor. Given that the Indies state invested in and “protected” his newspaper business, it is understandable that it was Parada Harahap who “introduced” the Malay version of the Penal Code on journalism and in effect helped the government socialize this particular regulation.²⁴⁹ But he did this under the appearance that he was providing guidance for fellow indigenous journalists to avoid falling victim to the “thorns” of the newspaper trade. While Harahap might have been himself, as he claimed, charged with press and speech offences twelve times, these incidents occurred early on in his career, before he won the favor of the authorities.

Nevertheless, as I have described above, *persdelict* charges could result not only from the publication of one particular article, but what was deemed by the authorities as the cumulative impact of series of articles and deeds by a journalist. In other words, knowing the regulations did not always help journalists protect themselves, as it could be difficult from them to recognize when specifically they crossed the invisible line. For individual journalists, deciding whether or not to heed the law that Harahap aimed at explaining with his book came down to a matter of the principles they held. For those with a penchant for anti-colonial or anti-government opinion, charges of *persdelict* came about rather easily and frequent. These journalists tended to be more willing to confront the accusation and defend themselves. Indeed, as in the case of Semaoen, a journalist could turn the tribunal into a good opportunity

²⁴⁹ It is to be noted, however, that his translation often does not make any sense, in part because he was not familiar with legal term, and also because his Dutch ability was insufficient.

for effective propaganda. As I will explore more closely below, however, this brand of journalism however was very different from the motivation that inspired the journalistic activities of Parada Harahap and the publication of his book on *persdelict*.

Furthermore, although Harahap's book was the first guidebook to be published on behalf of journalism in the Malay language, the arbitrary nature of Dutch colonial governance in action rendered the book's explanations unclear and far less useful to journalists than immediately apparent. The Indies state had introduced Western-modeled laws to manage journalistic expressions and maintain order in the colonial society. Yet, the actual law enforcement was not impartial or systematic at all. In practice, individual law enforcement officials were free to decide which article of the Penal Code was applicable, what constituted a punishable offence, and what the specific parameter of free speech/press in effect were.

This legal ambiguity ironically enough formed the basis for the colonial society. The colonial society that John S. Furnivall projected in the 1930s was in nature a plural society, which he defines as a society "comprising two or more elements or social orders which live side by side, yet without mingling, in one political unit."²⁵⁰

In his book, Parada Harahap not only attempted to identify the ambiguous lines that delineated transgressions against the prevailing legal code, but also encouraged fellow journalists to stay away from those lines. His success in making money out of the newspaper business gave him the authority to "guide" his fellow indigenous journalists. The middle of the 1920s saw a fundamental shift in the world of the press, that is, from a vehicle and organ of expression for nationalistic movement being pushed forward by particular political associations to a driving force of capitalistic ventures. Journalists of the 1910s and early 1920s were political activists and

²⁵⁰ Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, p. 446.

propagandists, and were usually affiliated with one or more political organizations. The rise of indigenous political movement allowed newspapers to play a crucial role in spreading the party ideas to a wider audience. Even popular newspapers could be party organs. But as the indigenous middle class grew in the 1920s, a new type of audience emerged that did not like partisan newspapers, demanding instead that newspapers provide them with entertainment and apolitical content. This was the trend that Harahap astutely observed, and he seized this new business opportunity.

[The partisan newspaper] is what has caused the slow advancement of journalism in the Indies, albeit the development of such political propaganda was rapid. Appropriately, a journalist does not join any party, so his assessment in the newspaper can be uncontaminated (*zuiver*) and neutral.²⁵¹

Harahap was certain that the newly emerging urban middle class preferred non-partisan newspapers. Therefore, his newspaper *Bintang Timoer* proudly announced that it did not have any affiliation with any political party. He was confident of the profitability of starting a newspaper business.

Is the Indies conducive for a profit-oriented newspaper?

In my opinion, why not?

50,000,000 Indonesians speak Malay, and now 10% are literate, that is five millions [...] who can read, and this number will increase every hour.

A newspaper enterprise, if run appropriately, can be a vital business, that is, it can bring profit to other enterprises as well, because a newspaper is intertwined with daily needs and commerce, so people are willing to pay to

²⁵¹ Harahap, *Journalistiek*, p. 124.

read the news and to pay to advertise, and as such, being a well of money
(*djadi soemoer oewang*) is good for the newspaper.²⁵²

Harahap saw the newspapers as commercial ventures and in this sense became himself a “modern” journalist as well as a business executive. In his other book *Pers dan Journalistiek*, he emphasized on the need to produce a new kind of newspaper and to explore a new readership. He explicitly points out that the urban middle class does not always pay attention to partisan politics and affiliated party organs, and therefore non-partisan neutral newspapers would theoretically attract the emerging urban middle class. “Newspapers have their market (*pasar*) and necessities (*keperloean*)”²⁵³ and “have already become a commercial product (*pers djadi perdagangan*).”²⁵⁴ Harahap had confidence that his newspaper would be profitable because its market consisted of the growing urban middle class. Of course, in order to run a publishing business smoothly, he needed to maintain a good working relationship with the colonial authorities and generally accept with the colonial order of things. Socializing the journalistic laws was obviously a favorable development in the government’s eyes. The colonial secret documents never mentioned Parada Harahap as a radical journalist or a dangerous movement leader, except for one instance where one of his articles was listed among *persdelict* cases in 1919.²⁵⁵

The Tjahaja Hindia Company, which Harahap started in Batavia in 1926, reflects Harahap’s conviction. This newspaper company was capitalized at 75,000 guilders and had sales agents in Batavia as well as Medan and in Bandjarmasin in Borneo. Besides *Tjahaja Hindia*, the company also published four other newspapers,

²⁵² Harahap, *Journalistiek*, pp. 120-121.

²⁵³ Harahap, *Pers dan Journalistiek* (Medan: Handel Mij. Indische Drukkerij, 1941), p. 54.

²⁵⁴ Harahap, *Journalistiek*, p. 120.

²⁵⁵ IPO, No. 43, 1919. Despite of his claim, except for the case in 1919, I cannot identify any evidence in which Harahap was victimized by *persdelict* many times and imprisoned for total seven months.

Bintang Hindia, *Djawa Barat*, *Sinar Pasoendan*, and *Berita Preanger*, and the weekly *Semangat*. *Tjahaja Hindia* however was its best-selling newspaper and circulated widely in comparison to other indigenous newspapers at the time. 4,500 to 5,000 copies were printed daily, with a subscription fee of 6 guilders for four months. By a simple calculation, its net profit was 1,000 guilders a month. This profit was reflected in the salary of *Tjahaja Hindia*'s employees. The editor-in-chief earned 450 guilders a month plus a company-car, the first editors received 225 guilders, second editors 175 guilders, third editors 125 guilders, reporters 100 guilders, and accountants 175 guilders each.²⁵⁶ These figures were higher than the standard income of an urban middle class in the Indies.

The rise of such apolitical and commercial oriented newspapers symbolized, on the one hand, the permeation of the colonial order and principles into the society. On the other, it also reflected the growing presence of an urban middle class that was politically conservative and whose primary concern was to maintain its standard of living. Commercial newspapers also covered the general development of the indigenous political movement, but they tended to discuss culture, religion, education, and woman's emancipation in a way that reflected the readers' interests. Articles concerning material wellbeing were naturally more appealing.

Writing and publishing travel books became another business interest that Harahap pursued, tapping into the growing popularity of "light" journalistic writings among middle class readers. While similar travel accounts had been popular among Europeans in the Indies, it was Harahap who introduced this new genre of writing to the indigenous middle-class. His major travel accounts include *Dari Pantai Kepantai* (*From Coast to Coast*, describing a trip to Sumatra in 1925 and 1926), *Menoedjoe Matahari Terbit* (*Towards Sunrise*, about a journey to Japan in 1933 and 1934),

²⁵⁶ Harahap, *Pers dan Journalistiek*, p. 20.

Mengelilingi Poelau Djawa (Traveling around Java), and *Sepandjang Boekit Barisan (Along Bukit Barisan*, featuring the volcanic mountain range on the western part of Sumatra). Like most writings in this genre, Harahap's travel accounts illustrate the panorama of cities and villages he visited, what he encountered in those places, and the people he met during those visits. Political discussions and propaganda are noticeably absent. This non-partisan and apolitical perspective enhanced the popularity of his travel books.

While on the surface, it is true that Harahap's travel logs appear to be non-political, there is more to them than simply leisure. His descriptions sometimes carried certain intentions. Half of *Dari Pantai Kepantai* is about Padang and Minangkabau, which covers youth movement, journalists, women's movement, education, history, and the customs of the Minangkabau. Though the book appears to be informative mainly for purposes of leisure, a politically informed reader can easily recognize the names of political and religious activists and journalists whom Harahap had met or was acquainted with in Sumatra.²⁵⁷ In other words, for those who were interested in the indigenous religious and nationalistic movements in Sumatra, this travel account actually provided precious information. And since Harahap had a close working relations with the Dutch authorities, it is possible that his information was more beneficial to the colonial government than to ordinary readers. The fact that he could travel to many places in the Indies relatively freely seems to corroborate this assumption. In fact, *Bintang Hindia*, another newspaper managed by Harahap often ran advertisements for Balai Poestaka, the state publishing house and engineer of *IPO* (in which, *Bintang Hindia* was categorized as a moderate nationalistic newspaper).

²⁵⁷ Parada Harahap, *Dari Pantai Kepantai: Perdjalananan Ke-Soematra October-Dec. 1925 dan Maart-April 1926* (Weltevreden: Uitgevers Maatschappij Bintang Hindia, 1926). It is also to be noted that he traveled West Sumatra, his home country, a year before the communist uprising, but nothing about such secret plot can be detected from his travel account.

Table 4-2: Urbanization in the Indonesian archipelago, 1890-1930						
Year	Islands	Number of towns by number of inhabitants			Urban population	
		20,000-49,999	50,000-99,999	100,000 or more	absolute	in % of total population
1890	Java	4	4	1	471,068	2
1920	Java	23	2	4	1,434,152	4.2
	Sumatra	2	1		113,297	1.9
	Borneo	1			41,661	2.7
	Celebes	1			44,605	1.5
1930	Java	23	4	6	2,121,127	5.2
	Sumatra	3	1		189,414	2.5
	Borneo	2	1		108,393	5.4
	Celebes	1	1		85,492	2.1
[Source: Hans Gooszen, <i>A Demographic History of the Indonesian Archipelago, 1880-1942</i> (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1999), p. 52.]						

Table 4-3: Population size and growth, 1905-1930, for cities on Java with 50,000 or more inhabitants in 1930 (indigenous population)						
		Population size			Average annual population growth (in %)	
		1905	1920	1930	1905-1920	1920-30
West Java	Batavia	99,320	186,837	325,978	4.2	5.6
	Bandung	41,393	79,017	130,028	4.3	5.0
	Meester Cornelis	29,828	42,819	83,677	2.4	6.8
	Buitenzorg	26,214	36,111	51,935	2.2	3.7
North Coast of Java	Semarang	76,413	126,628	175,457	3.4	3.3
	Pekalongan	36,816	43,226	56,954	1.1	2.8
South-central Java	Yogyakarta	72,641	94,254	121,979	1.8	2.6
	Surakarta	109,524	123,005	149,585	0.8	2.0
Eastern Java	Surabaya	124,473	148,411	271,275	1.2	6.1
	Malang	24,274	35,165	70,662	2.5	7.1
[Source: Hans Gooszen, <i>A Demographic History of the Indonesian Archipelago</i> , p. 90.]						

Table 4-4: Population size and growth, 1905-1930, of Sumatran towns with 20,000 or more inhabitants in 1930 (indigenous population)						
East Coast of Sumatra	Medan	3,191	23,823	41,270	13.5	5.6
West Sumatra	Padang		28,754	40,744		3.5
South Sumatra	Palembang	50,703	60,720	86,882	1.2	3.6
Southeast Sumatra	Teluk Betung	2,774	12,811	20,518	10.3	4.8
West Borneo	Pontianak	13,278	19,074	27,160	2.4	3.6
South Borneo	Banjarmasin		41,661	57,822	5.4	3.3
East Borneo	Balikpapan		11,823	23,411		6.9
South Celebes	Makassar	20,178	44,605	65,445	5.3	3.9
North Celebes	Manado	6,669	12,229	20,047	4.1	5.1
[Source: Hans Gooszen, <i>A Demographic History of the Indonesian Archipelago</i> , p. 109.]						

Under these circumstances, Parada Harahap was able to write as follows just before the conclusion of his book *Journalistiek*:

There will be more supplementary [legal] articles.

Because of the large number of persdelict in recent years and even this year, it is very likely that soon there will be additional articles in the law concerning “hate-sowing” cases, that is class hatred, or group hatred, for instance between the capitalists and the workers.²⁵⁸

As this quotation suggests, Harahap regards discussions of class antagonism and conflict between capitalists and laborers in the Indies as manifestations of hatred-related discourse in the press. It is worth noting that, unlike Semaoen, a communist leader in the late 1910s and early 1920s who attributed the economic gap in the society to racial distinctions,²⁵⁹ Harahap saw class difference as a factor in hatred-related incidents. Rather than focusing his newspaper on problems of class difference, Harahap chose to direct his attention to the emerging middle class as the most promising consumers for the newspaper industry. He was not, however, the only manager and journalist who saw the growing potential of the Malay print market, as “the Table 4-5: Number of Malay Periodicals” indicates below. The middle of the 1920s ushered in a rapid increase in the number of Malay periodicals, and this showed an expansion of Malay readership in the Indies, which Harahap had correctly assessed.

After having gone bankrupt in the early 1930s due to the government’s cutback of subsidies for major indigenous newspapers, Harahap made a comeback in 1936 with a new paper, *Tjaja Timoer* (Light of the East). This daily subscribed to the Pan-

²⁵⁸ Harahap, *Journalistiek*, p. 141.

²⁵⁹ Semaoen, *Persdelict Semaoen*; Semaoen, *Hikajat Kadiroen*. See also Yamamoto, “Reading and Placing Semaoen’s *Hikajat Kadiroen*.”

Asianism that the Japanese government had been promoting in the Indies since the early 1930s, as well as in other Asian regions. It indicates Harahap's close connection with the Japanese authorities as their political influence increased in the 1930s, just as he was in the 1920s with the Dutch authorities. It also signals that Harahap relied on economic patronage for his business. His conservative political stance can perhaps explain why Indonesian history textbooks on the nationalist movement have neglected his name, despite his contributions to the development of "Indonesian" journalism and newspaper industry.

Table 4-5: Numbers of Malay Periodicals listed in <i>IPO</i> from 1918 to 1929						
	Newspapers		Magazines		Chinese Periodicals	
	Java	Outer Islands	Java	Outer Islands	Java	Outer Islands
1918	33	18			6	2
1919	34	19				
Jan. 1920	31	24			6	2
Nov. 1920	34	22			6	2
Mar. 1922	28	9	11	11	10	4
Aug. 1922	25	11	16	16	13	4
Jan. 1923	28	16	28	20	12	4
July. 1923	27	19	31	24	11	4
Oct. 1923	26	20	26	24	12	4
Mar. 1924	25	18	30	33	14	5
July. 1924	27	20	22	28	13	4
Oct. 1924	26	21	24	29	14	5
Jan. 1925	28	21	32	31	16	6
Apr. 1925	33	20	40	36	17	7
Aug. 1925	36	21	31	37	18	9
Dec. 1925	38	33	28	38	20	9
June. 1926	36	25	24	37	21	10
Sept. 1926	30	23	25	30	20	7
Mar. 1927	26	20	27	27	20	12
Apr. 1928	33	27	28	20	26	14
Sept. 1929	46	33	45	22	27	11
[Source: <i>IPO</i> , 1918-1929]						

Parada Harahap was the first to publish the Malay translation of Dutch regulations on the press, and offered "guidance" to his fellow indigenous journalists

wishing to survive in the industry. His writings support the view that legal measures were important to maintain social order. There was no hint that he would confront the authorities as he profited from their patronage; compliance was “necessary” in order to run a business in the colonial setting. Unlike Tirto and Semaoen, Harahap conceived of the newspaper as a means to make money. Unlike the indigenous press in the 1910s and early 1920s, which had played a major role in confronting the colonial authorities, newspaper business under Parada Harahap played along with the basic tenets of the colonial order, and in fact derived advantage from his collaboration with the authorities. He was after all one of the most distinguished and controversial indigenous journalists in the Indies. It was this commercially minded attitude that pushed the expansion of the Malay print market from the 1920s onwards.

The Case of Chinese-Malay Press

Concerns regarding *persdelict* for the Indies Chinese press manifested in different forms compared to Indonesian newspapers. Since the Indies authorities paid more attention to the political consequences of the Indonesian nationalist movement than to the Chinese, colonial documents did not really cover *persdelict* cases against Chinese journalists. In order to trace the Chinese cases, one needs to read the Indies Chinese press, which covered the Chinese as well as Indonesian cases. In the 1920s, Chinese-Malay newspapers had larger circulation than their Indonesian counterparts, because the former were less political than commercial and entertaining. Nevertheless, Chinese journalists were also frequently imprisoned due to *persdelict*. The question then arises: How did it come about that these less political Chinese journalists were victimized by *persdelict*? In order to understand this paradox, we need to turn our attention to the characteristics of Chinese-Malay newspapers in the Indies.

In late 1921 the renowned Dutch novelist Louis Couperus traveled “back” to the Indies where he had spent his younger days, and began churning out nostalgia-ridden travelogues. His travel accounts were first published in *De Haagsche Post* between December 1921 and May 1923 for readers back in The Hague, then appeared in book form in 1924 and was subsequently translated into English.²⁶⁰ The travelogues were originally designed for newspaper readers in The Hague to give them an idea about how calm and exotic the Indies was. Although Couperus admitted that he was surprised by the changes in Batavia, his description mainly centered on the way of life of the local people, their manners and cultures. When he traveled through Sumatra and Java from October 1921, the latter had been experiencing radical indigenous political activism, and his accounts create the impression that the Indies was the same peaceful and exotic place that Dutch people had always imagined it to be. Considering that Couperus was a recognized figure in the Netherlands journalistic circle, there is little doubt that his writings attracted the interests of the Dutch middle class who were contemplating a career move, if not a visit, to the Indies.

The “calm” that Couperus sensed in the Indies was mostly legally engineered. The Dutch authorities had been working rather hard on disciplining “tendentious” newspapers. In 1925 Rinkes, as the director of Balai Poestaka specifically pointed out that *Api* and *Sin Po* were bold newspapers that liked to draw government’s attention. Both newspapers were popular because of their political orientation. *Api* was an organ of PKI (Communist Party of Indonesia) and People’s Association (*Sarekat Rakjat*, SR) since 1925.²⁶¹ Its editor-in-chief was Soekabat, who was the former editor-in-chief of *Sinar Hindia*. Considering that PKI claimed between 1,000 and 1,300 members by 1924, while Sarekat Rakyat had 30,000 and 50,000 members, *Api* could potentially

²⁶⁰ Louis Couperus, *Eastward* (translated by J. Menzies Wilson and C. C. Crispin) (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1924).

²⁶¹ SR was the PKI’s mass based organization, formerly known as Red SI, leftwing of SI.

claim 30,000 to 50,000 subscribers. But in reality *Api* faced severe supervision from the authorities. Unlike other media in the vernacular press, it had to get official approval for each issue before its distribution. In 1925 the police began to harass *Api* by confiscating not only copies of the disapproved issues, but also its typing equipment from time to time. The authorities also forbade civil servants to subscribe to *Api* and eventually it was pushed to near bankruptcy by the end of 1925.²⁶²

By contrast, *Sin Po* did not get such severe harassment from the authorities. As a Batavia-based Chinese-Malay daily, it was politically oriented to China and had promoted Chinese nationalism among the overseas Chinese in the Indies since 1911. It was launched in the form of a weekly journal with its first edition in October 1, 1910. In April 1912, *Sin Po* began to be published as a daily newspaper with the former Controller, a Dutchman, J. R. Razoux Kuhr as the director.²⁶³ In the 1910s, it was common practice for vernacular press newspapers to employ, Dutchmen and *Indos* in order to protect themselves from the authorities. This changed in the 1920s as Chinese assumed the role of running newspapers by themselves. According to *IPO*'s list, *Sin Po*'s chief editors were Tjoe Bou San (1920 – August 1925) and Kwee Kek Beng (December 1925 – September 1929). It was the most circulated Chinese-Malay newspaper and in 1938 had 6,000 subscribers. But even popular *Sin Po* was not free from *persdelict* as *Sin Po* Weekly articles about the boycott of Japanese goods published in June 9, 1923 drew *persdelict* charges from the colonial authorities. For the offense, editors – Kwee Kek Beng and Ang Jan Goan – were sentenced for one year and fined f 200.²⁶⁴

²⁶² McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, p. 306.

²⁶³ Kwee Kek Beng, *Doea Poeloe Lima Tahun sebagai Wartawan 1922-1947* (Batavia: Kuo, 1948), p. 21. But in 1916 Kuhr had to resign due to his involvement in a sex-related murder case and his jail term.

²⁶⁴ Kwee Kek Beng, *Doea Poeloe Lima Tahun sebagai Wartawan*, pp. 16-18.

Apart from politically opinionated newspapers, apolitical newspapers (as Parada Harahap had correctly foreseen) were gaining market share. As new kinds of newspapers emerged and as these conformed to new kinds of audiences, concern grew among the Dutch officials. This concern related to specific characteristics of Chinese-Malay newspapers, which had colored the journalistic landscape in the Indies since the nineteenth century. Questioning the quality of these newspapers, then director of Balai Poestaka G. W. J. Drewes derided that the “American Yellow Press” (*de Amerikaansche yellow press*) had emerged in the Indies.²⁶⁵ “Yellow press or yellow journalism,” in the words of Frank Mott, is characterized by “the familiar aspects of sensationalism – crime news, scandal and gossip, divorces and sex, and stress upon the reporting of disasters and sports.”²⁶⁶ As a matter of fact, newspapers translations, and elaborated accounts of actual events had been major reading materials in the Indies since the turn of the twentieth century. Reportage of various sensational and bizarre occurrences that took place throughout the Indies was a significant characteristic of the Chinese-Malay press. The newspapers were filled with accounts of murder, rape, adultery, fraud, robbery and other crimes. These accounts provided a rich resource for the Indies Chinese popular fiction.²⁶⁷ Similarly, many popular novels at the turn of the twentieth century contained some elements of sensationalism.

²⁶⁵ G. W. J. Drewes, “De strijd om de persvrijheid en de oudste Inlandsche couranten,” *Koloniale Studiën*, 1934, p. 34. Drewes was considered an expert on indigenous intellectual affairs and was in the position to look over the vernacular press. His description of the history of indigenous press ended in 1926, although it was published in 1934, probably in that year he was transferred from a position at the Office of the [Acting] Native Affairs Advisor to the Bureau for Popular Literature, one of whose functions was to monitor the vernacular press. For Drewes’ career, see A. Teeuw, “In memoriam G. W. J. Drewes, 28 November 1899 – 7 June 1992,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Vol. 150, No. 1 (1994), pp. 27-49.

²⁶⁶ Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism: A History: 1690-1963* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 539, quoted in W. Joseph Campbell, *Yellow Journalism: Puncturing the Myths, Defining the Legacies* (Westport, London: Praeger, 2001), p. 7. Yellow journalism reflected “the familiar aspects of sensationalism – crime news, scandal and gossip, divorces and sex, and stress upon the reporting of disasters and sports.”

²⁶⁷ Nio Joe Lan, *Sastera Indonesia-Tionghoa*, p. 34.

Even though this type of journalism and popular literature came to be associated with the Chinese later on, Eurasians had long been its preceding proponents in the Indies. As was the case of *Sin Po*, Chinese-Malay newspapers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries collaborated with Dutch and Indo journalists for their political protection.²⁶⁸ Three popular journalists and writers are worth mentioning: F. H. Wiggers, H. Kommer and F. Pangemanann. The first two were Eurasians (*Indo*), and the third Menadonese. Wiggers was an editor of Batavia-based *Pembrita Betawi* in 1903, while Kommer was an editor of Soerabaja-based *Pewarta Soerabaja* (Soerabaja Herald). Their literary and journalistic works were popular among the Eurasians and Indies Chinese communities. Wiggers translated *Le Comte de Monte Cristo*, among the most popular books at that time, with the help of a Chinese, Lie Kim Hok.²⁶⁹ Lie himself would become the pioneer of Chinese-Malay literature.²⁷⁰ Wiggers' original novel, *Njai Isah* in 1903 has been described as "full of sensational events, clandestine meetings, illicit relationships and mysterious preternatural occurrences."²⁷¹ Pangemanann's prose work, *Tjerita Si Tjonat* (The Story of Tjonat, 1900) features bandits (*perampok*), who terrorized the countryside around Batavia with various murders, kidnappings, and thefts.²⁷²

Since late nineteenth century, Malay newspapers such as *Selomporet Melaju* (Malay Trumpet) and *Bintang Soerabaia* (Soerabaia Star) regularly published

²⁶⁸ For the rise of Chinese-owned press, see Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, pp. 63-71.

²⁶⁹ Lie Kim Hok was also a very popular contemporary writer.

²⁷⁰ Njo Joe Lan, *Sastra Indonesia-Tionghoa*, p. 28.

²⁷¹ C. Watson, "Some preliminary remarks on the antecedents of modern Indonesian literature," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Volume 127, No. 4, (1971), p. 420. Njai "refers to the women who kept house for Dutch or other European and sometimes Chinese men and who often bore children by them." At the turn of the twentieth century, njai stories became popular because they reflected social anxiety generating from the increasing separation of groups in the Indies. But at the same time, as James Siegel points out, "the family composed of a European man and a native woman was thought to be the equal or perhaps more of the Dutch family." Siegel, *Fetish, Recognition, Revolution*, p. 55.

²⁷² Watson, "Some preliminary remarks on the antecedents of modern Indonesian literature," p. 421.

serialized fiction, usually on the front page. Since the 1880s, the Chinese-Malay newspapers carried many sensational articles, which emulated the style of minor but influential Dutch journalists of the day. It was also a standard practice for Chinese-Malay novelists and poets to draw from events reported in newspapers. The writing sources were also harvested from newspaper coverage.²⁷³ In this sense, it is arguable that the Chinese-Malay press was removed from politics, at least in the context of the Indies (although some were in fact promoting Chinese nationalism). With regard to the indigenous political movement, no Chinese-Malay newspapers were affiliated with any political parties in the 1900s to 1920s, and so proved themselves to precede Parada Harahap in pursuing a politically neutral and market-oriented press form of journalism. Because of their non-partisan outlook, the general audience consumed Chinese-Malay newspapers as entertainment. As Von Faber put it:

The newspapers [in the Indies] are not, as in America, hastily scanned in train, tram or restaurant, but are quietly perused at home after the day's work is done; up-country, and in the plantations, which are frequently remote from the large towns with their cinemas, dancing-halls and plays, concerts or other shows, the newspaper and the wireless constitute for many the only pleasant and harmless diversion in the evening hours.²⁷⁴

Reading thus took place “after the day’s work” in late afternoon or in the evening hours, and, consequently, evening newspapers were many in number. Commercial newspapers in the Indies offered a wide range of such “diversion” – light news,

²⁷³ One of the first examples was a poem entitled *Sair Kadatangan Sri Maharadja Siam di Betawi* [Verses on the Royal Visit of the King of Siam in Batavia] published in 1870, which was based on a newspaper (*Bintang Barat*) article on the visit of Siam King to Batavia in the same year.

²⁷⁴ Von Faber, *A Short History of Journalisms in the Dutch East Indies*, p. 111.

amusing personal anecdotes, satires, captivating *feuilleton*, fantasy-inducing advertisements, and practical information. Many popular authors published their compositions first as serialized stories in popular newspapers. In the colonial setting, newspapers were certainly the “one-day best-sellers” as Benedict Anderson has imagined,²⁷⁵ but they were also consumed repeatedly, belatedly, even several days after their publication. Once the reading habit was established, it became hard to break, even by the claw of censorship. Popular demand kept print market going, while the colonial authorities continued to look for ways to contain and tame it. In the middle of the 1920s, when Dutch officials were busy corresponding about how to contain press excesses and Indonesian journalists were trying to resist *persdelict*, the habit of reading had taken root in the daily life of some segment of the society. The number of literate people continued to increase, thanks to the proliferation of school education since the beginning of the twentieth century, and it was to this new audience the Chinese-Malay newspapers appealed. Even the government made a distinction between the Chinese-Malay and Indonesian newspapers, in reality there was much less separation in terms of readership.

This was the general mood of the newspaper industry when *Sin Jit Po* (New Daily)²⁷⁶ was launched in Soerabaja in 1923. It was to become among the most influential Chinese-Malay newspapers in the East Java region in the 1920s. Forced out of business in November 1929 due to legal disputes with rival Chinese-Malay newspapers *Soeara Publiek* (Public Voice) and *Pewartar Soerabaja*, on December 2, 1929, *Sin Jit Po* was reincarnated as *Sin Tit Po* (New Direct News).²⁷⁷ Here a little

²⁷⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 30-36. Anderson refers the phrase “one-day best-sellers” to purchasing of newspapers. Newspapers would become “out of date” after a new edition of the next day is published.

²⁷⁶ The Chinese name of *Sin Jit Po* was 泗水新日報. The literal meaning of *Sin Jit Po* (新日報) was “New Daily,” although the Chinese name read “Soerabaja’s New Daily.”

²⁷⁷ *Sin Tit Po*’s Chinese name was 新直報, which literary means “New Direct News.” Liem Koen Hiam intentionally dropped the name of Soerabaja from his newspaper.

background explanation helps illuminate the complicated relationship among Chinese journalists. It was not unusual for Chinese journalists to quarrel with each other. As mentioned above, in 1925 Liem Koen Hian launched his newspaper *Soeara Publiek*. He often attacked the leaders of *Sin Jit Po*, especially P. H. Phoa and Raden Mas Bintarti, as opportunists, cowards, and not professional, while Liem's colleague, Kwee Thiam Tjing, satirized Phoa in many essays.²⁷⁸ In the end, those who attacked *Sin Jit Po* took over the newspaper and in 1929 made it *Sin Tit Po*. In its inaugural issue on December 2, 1929, the fiery chief editor Liem Koen Hian promised to reveal the "dirty" politics behind *Sin Jit Po*'s demise.²⁷⁹

Why did Liem and Kwee take over *Sin Jit Po* and what was the attraction of the newspaper? *Sin Jit Po* had no political organization behind it, but as the market started to expand since the 1920s, the colonial authorities, i.e. the Office for Chinese Affairs, kept a close watch on local newspapers and from time to time applied disciplinary measures against them. Although it was relatively independent, *Sin Jit Po* had a liberal and critical outlook in that it often challenged the repressive approach of the authorities. During its run *Sin Jit Po* was an active agent in the reporting of *persdelict* cases in the vernacular press, and in this role gave rise to an interesting journalistic practice that I refer to as "the culture of citation." The story of its particular approach to covering of *persdelict* cases reveals how the colonial authorities tried to restrain liberal newspapers through intimidation of their reporters and how the newspapers fought back.

In its early days, *Sin Jit Po* had P. H. Phoa as the editor-in-chief. Oei Kie Hok and R. M. Bintarti in Surabaya, and Ang Hoay Lie in Samarinda, made up the editorial

²⁷⁸ I owe this relationship among Chinese journalists to Benedict Anderson. For Kwee Thiam Tjing, see Anderson, "Kata Pengantar," in Tjamboek Berdoeri, *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara*, pp. 1-78.

Tjamboek Berdoeri was Kwee Thiam Tjing's pen name.

²⁷⁹ "Sin Tit Po," *Sin Tit Po*, December 2, 1929; "Menghina: *Sin Jit Po* contra Tjioe Hwie Bing," *Sin Tit Po*, December 16, 1929.

board. The director was Oei Ping Bie; its administrator, Njoo Khee Tjo. It had its own printing house, the N. V. Handelsdrukkerij Sin Jit Po. Its distributing agents extended from East Java (Madioen, Malang, Wonogiri), Central Java (Jogjakarta, Bangil), West Java (Soekaboemi, Blitar), Celebes (Makassar, Toeloengagung, Gorontalo), Borneo (Samarinda), and even to the Netherlands. After Liem Koen Hian took over the editorship and changed its name to *Sin Tit Po*, it became among the most politically influential dailies in the Chinese-Malay language between the 1920s and the 1930s, not only in Soerabaja and East Java, but also in other parts of the colony.

Sin Jit Po, like other newspapers of the time, covered various kinds of news and articles not only on Soerabaja and the Indies, but also on China and other parts of the world. The basic format is as follows.

Section 1: Page 1: City of Soerabaja; *Feuilleton*: “White Blood or News without limits,” as told by Th. H. Phoa

Page 2: Overseas Chinese and China; Commercial News

Page 3: Wired News; Indies and Other Countries

Page 4: Advertisements

Section 2: Page 1: Sports News; Indies and Other Countries

Page 2: Overseas Chinese and China

Pages 3-4: Advertisements

Section 3: Page 1: Indies and Other Countries; “Tong See Han Yan Gie: An exciting Chinese story, meticulously written, and charming,” by Nemo

Page 2: continuation of Indies and Other Countries from page 1

Pages 3-4: Advertisements

The organization of sections suggests that *Sin Jit Po* did not really emphasize any segment because the same subtitles recur in all the sections. Its general-sounding headings allowed it to carry an eclectic variety of contents – a compilation of local news on Indies Chinese, news on China and overseas Chinese, and world news. One can say that *Sin Jit Po* maintained such flexibility in order to cover a wide range of content in line with readers' interests. To be able to carry such a variety of news and content from a wide geographic area, it was imperative for a newspaper to establish and rely on a network of correspondents and news agencies, to obtain reports where it did not have its own correspondent, and to cite articles from one another. At that time, the semi-official news agency, *Aneta* (*Algemeen Nieuws En Telegraaf Agentschap*, Netherlands Indies news and telegraphic agency) had a monopoly of news from abroad and its distribution.²⁸⁰ A culture of citation emerged out of such journalistic practice, which allowed newspapers to transcend not only its locality and lack of personnel, but also language barriers. Thanks to citations, Malay-speaking Chinese could follow the contents of Dutch, Javanese, and Chinese newspapers, which might be of interest to him, but would otherwise be inaccessible. For the journalists themselves, the culture of citation provided the basis to imagine a kind of a journalistic community – complete with friends and foes.

Even though it was not connected to any political organization, *Sin Jit Po* featured many politics-related reports and news along with articles on culture. It also carried many commercial advertisements from Soerabaja as well as other major cities in Java. Among its miscellaneous contents, coverage of *persdelict* cases was a

²⁸⁰ Aneta was established by an Indies-born media tycoon Dominique Willem Berretty. Aneta had another meaning in Dutch, that is, "Altijd Nummer Een Trots Alles" (Always number one in spite of everything). In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Aneta eventually monopolized news from and to the Indies. Aneta's monopoly of news distribution did not really affect the development of the vernacular press. Vernacular presses did not have enough funds to buy news from Aneta, so they cited Dutch press articles instead.

frequent feature in *Sin Jit Po*. In a period of one year alone, from July 1925 to June 1926, the newspaper carried 40 articles related to *persdelict*. Because *persdelict* was a convenient disciplinary measure against “unruly” press, it was invoked for a variety of reasons. Other than to politically sensitive and hate-provoking writings, it also applied to (offensive) writings of influential persons or families, to accounts based on hearsay or false witness, to criticism of other imperialist powers, even for using words (terms) unfamiliar to the authorities. Additionally, any offended person, not only the authorities, could invoke *persdelict* articles.

Take for instance the case involving a local Chinese official. The daily *Keng Po* was slapped with *persdelict* because a former *Kapitan Tjina* (a civil official appointed by the colonial authorities to oversee a local Chinese community) in Tjeribon filed a complaint. As cited in *Sin Jit Po*, *Keng Po* had published an article accusing the Chinese official of embezzlement. “Mr. Oeij Thiam Tjoan embezzled f 3,600 – the money belonging to the association Hoa Ho Siang Kiok.”²⁸¹ The *Kapitans* were usually very rich people and their job was to control the various Chinese communities.²⁸² Considering their social status and job, therefore, the accusation of the fraud by the *Kapitan* stirred the concern in Chinese communities and became the victim of *persdelict*.

Another case concerned religion and the colonial authorities. In June 1926, Mr. Wardi, editor of the weekly *Soerapati*, was questioned for a phrase he used in an article, “*Agama dipake kedok*” (Religion used as a mask), published on October 3, 1925.²⁸³ He was interrogated under the *persdelict* law because the authorities suspected that the phrase conveyed hatred against the Regent of Bandoeng.

²⁸¹ *Sin Jit Po*, September 17, 1925 (Th. 3, No. 60), L2-1.

²⁸² On the *Kapitan* system, see Mona Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia 1837-1942* (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1996).

²⁸³ *Sin Jit Po*, Juni 22, 1926 (Th. 3, No. 134), L2-2.

Among journalists the existence of PID was a well known fact. The PID was established in 1919 and became a powerful government tool for the suppression of radical activities against the authorities. It was a public agency, with local offices, and employed a good number of spies and informers. While Balai Poestaka and its *IPO* used a monitoring approach to censor potential trouble (albeit not always effectively), the PID dealt with actual people and organizations in the field. Interestingly, this supposedly secret force communicated with and through the press in its dealings. Journalists were often summoned to a local PID station for discussion or questioning. All journalists knew who the local PID officers were. *Sin Jit Po*, for instance, reported receiving letters from PID, which disputed its article on the Political Information Service.²⁸⁴ In this way the readers were made aware of the existence PID, and it was, to a great extent, no longer a “secret.” However, by making its existence so visible, PID may have tried to induce self-control from the press and other “unruly” voices in the society.

Persdelict also provided the opportunity for journalists to demonstrate an appearance of journalistic valor. Court hearings on *persdelict* cases gave them the opportunity to poke fun at the authorities not only for the perceived injustices,²⁸⁵ but also for the general ignorance of Dutch officials with regard to local language and knowledge. Many *persdelict* cases led to prison terms for journalists as most of them refused to pay the fine, and chose instead to go to jail for a period of weeks, months, even a year. On the contrary, journalists who chose to pay fine in order to avoid imprisonment were often derided by other newspapers as “cowards.” Thus in spite of many *persdelict* charges against it, *Sin Jit Po* and its personnel were rather proud of

²⁸⁴ *Sin Jit Po*, November 5, 1925 (Th. 3, No. 99), L1-2.

²⁸⁵ Making fun of authorities at courts was a common strategy by nationalistic leaders since the late 1910s as the case of Semaoen’s *persdelict* discussed above.

their tenacious attitude; it eagerly reported about them and took the charges as a sign of its commitment to principled journalism.

This tradition of anti-authority is also reflected in the number of articles on Boven Digoel, the internment camp for political prisoners, which *Sin Jit Po* featured beginning in December 1926. The first news regarding the communist movement (later it was called “communist rebellion” by the colonial authorities) in West Sumatra was reported in *Sin Jit Po* on December 3, 1926 under the title “*Gerakan kaoem Communist di Sumatra Barat: Keadaan di Djawa hendak ditjontoh*” (“The Communist movement in West Sumatra: Wanting to emulate the situation in Java”). It was followed with the article “*Rahasia Communist di Soematera Barat terboeka: Pemboenoehan di Kamang*” (“Secrets of the West Sumatran Communists Exposed: Murders in Kamang”) on 24 December 1926. On April 13, 1927, “*Kedatengannya orang-orang jang diboeang di Tanah Merah (Boven Digoel)*” (“Arrival of Exiles in Tanah Merah (Boven Digoel)”) reported that the first group of the alleged Communists had reached Boven Digoel, the internment camp for Communists. Then the trial of the uprising case was related on April 29, 1927 issue (“*Papreksaan perkara pembrontakan di Sumatra Barat*” [“The Examination of the Rebellion Case in West Sumatra”]). Thus *Sin Jit Po* continuously and closely followed developments associated with Boven Digoel in 1927.²⁸⁶

Another case involved an influential Chinese family. Then editor-in-chief of *Sin Jit Po*, Th. H. Phoa, was tried for *persdelict* after the newspaper carried a *feuilleton*, which was based on the actual murder of a man named Oei Siem Nio. Beginning with the October 25, 1925 issue, “*Drama di hotel Oranje kamar No. 33: Pemboenoehan Oei Siem Nio: Ditoetoerken menoeroet katerangan2 jang sah*” (Drama in Room No. 33 of Oranje Hotel: The Murder of Oei Siem Nio, Recounted Based on

²⁸⁶ A closer analysis of Boven Digoel related news articles, see Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

Legitimate Sources) was serialized.²⁸⁷ For this story and other related accounts,²⁸⁸ the wife of the murder victim filed a lawsuit against *Sin Jit Po*. Mrs. Oei and her friends were reported (also by *Sin Jit Po*) as testifying in the court.²⁸⁹

On another occasion, Th. H. Phoa faced a charge of false accusation in his article in *Indische Courant*, a Batavia-based Dutch newspaper. The alleged accusation was against Mr. Abdullah Chasan, whom Th. H. Phoa had described as a dangerous person because he was said to be a communist. Mr. Abdullah Chasan gave his statement in the court, stating that he was not a communist, but only an ordinary peasant and member of SI.²⁹⁰ Considering that Th. H. Phoa was a resident of Malang, as was Mr. Abdullah Chasan, it is possible that the description of Chasan was based on hearsay. As noted earlier in this chapter, being a member of SI did not necessarily make one a communist. However, Malang had a history of strikes, among others the famous Tram Company strike in 1920, initiated by Semaoen. Since it was not unusual for a person to become member of multiple organizations in those days, being a member of SI did not eliminate the possibility that one was also associated with local communist groups. In this *persdelict* case, the court ultimately ruled against Phoa and sentenced him a fine of f50, substitutable by 10 days in prison and payment of court fee.

This Chasan vs. Phoa case highlights some noteworthy issues. Compared with other cases of *persdelict* involving politics or anti-government expressions, the penalty was relatively light. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that an ordinary peasant could file a lawsuit against an influential journalist in Soerabaja and Malang. The original

²⁸⁷ *Sin Jit Po*, October 25, 1925 (Th. 3, No. 90), L2-3.

²⁸⁸ *Sin Jit Po*, November 4, 1925 (Th. 3, No. 98) also put the announcement of new story of “Hikajat Kakedjian” (Story behind Brutality), which also investigates the background of the same murder case.

²⁸⁹ *Sin Jit Po*, December 8, 1925 (Th. 3, No. 127), L1-2.

²⁹⁰ “Persdelict,” *Han Po*, December 16, 1926. This article is based on the report in *Pewarta Soerabaja*, a leading Chinese-Malay newspaper in Soerabaja in the 1920s.

article, published by the Dutch paper *Indisch Courant*, was written in Dutch, which made it even less likely that an ordinary peasant could read it, unless he received assistance for its translation. Th. H. Phoa was himself reportedly subject to some kind of harassment, but *Sin Jit Po* remained vague with regard to the source of this intimidation.

The above-mentioned cases of *persdelict* and related articles give us some indications with regard to the commercial as well as entertainment value of the newspapers in which they appeared. Liberal minded *Sin Jit Po* attracted its readers' attention not only with its market-oriented eclectic contents, but also with its journalistic bravado. It used other newspapers (including its local rivals) as sources as well as object of reporting, while its coverage attracted other newspapers interests, too. *Sin Jit Po*-related *persdelict* cases tell a story that is different from those of political activists like Semaoen, working in the context of indigenous movements. Those living in the world of movement like Semaoen exposed how the authorities, including the indigenous bureaucrats, abused their power on daily basis. On the contrary, *persdelict* cases against or reported in *Sin Tit Po* touched upon the abuse of power by local Chinese officials, grievances from locally influential persons or families, religious issues, and individual false accusations. The audience of *Sin Jit Po* and others were familiar with such abuses of power, grievances, or personal squabbles. Reading cases of *persdelict* became like exchanging gossip over meals, and therefore each article was relatively short and entertaining to read.

It was obvious that post-publication censorship like *persdelict* might even encourage journalists to write provocative articles and give them a platform to broadcast their views. In the 1920s, *persdelict* was not only a legal principle that colonial authorities abused to secure their power, it was also a tool to which influential

people appealed to secure their protection from journalistic reporting. Hence *persdelict* related articles in the vernacular press increased the commercial value of the newspapers in which they appeared. As the above-mentioned *persdelict* cases reveal, *persdelict*-related articles satisfied the demands of the newspapers' audience. The time for the Indies government to reconsider *persdelict* and censorship had arrived.

CHAPTER 5

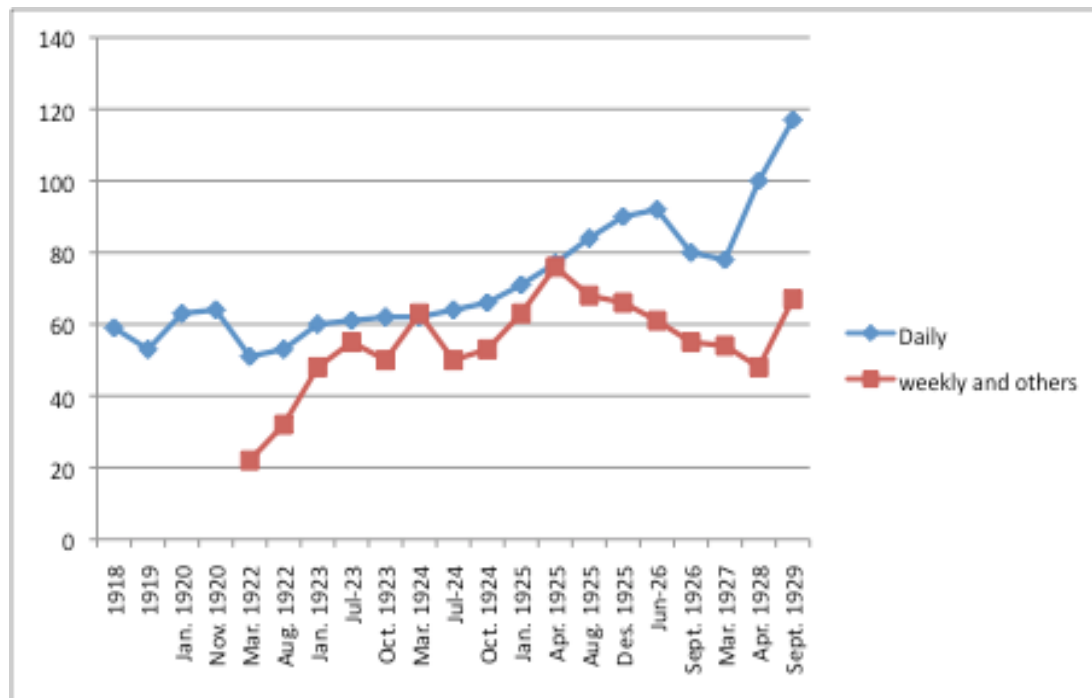
THE END OF ETHICAL ERA: THE FATE OF BALAI POESTAKA AND PRESS MONITORING

In the middle of the 1920s the government started to contain radicalized communist- related movements in Java and parts of Sumatra. This growing radical activism corresponded with the increasing number of *persdelict* cases, while the number of vernacular newspapers also increased over the last decade, that is, from 63 in January 1920, 60 in January 1923, and 71 in January 1925 to 100 in April 1928. While newspapers and popular literature continued to be printed, circulated, and consumed, after the unexpected communist revolts of 1926 in West Java and 1927 in West Sumatra, the political situation surrounding print culture changed drastically.

Coincidentally, communist revolts occurred several months after the new Governor-General, Andries Cornelis Dirk de Graeff, assumed his office in Batavia on March 26, 1926. Initially, de Graeff was a Dutch ambassador to Japan from 1919 to 1922, to the United States from 1922 to 1926, and was considered a close co-worker of the former liberal Governor-Generals Idenburg and Van Limburg Stirum. In the wake of criticism being voiced in the Netherlands at the ways in which the former conservative Governor-General Fock had taken a hard stance towards Indonesian radicals, de Graeff was expected to restore cooperative relationship between the government and Indonesians.²⁹¹ However, de Graeff found himself caught off guard by the revolts and immediately took firm steps to reorganize shaken government institutions to regain confidence.

²⁹¹ McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, p. 328.

Table 5-1: The Number of Malay Periodicals Listed in *IPO*, 1918-1929



[Source: various issues of *IPO*, 1918-1929]

Serious blame was directed to Balai Poestaka, which was an apparatus for surveillance. In its political mission of monitoring the press, Balai Poestaka had failed to detect the shifts in the indigenous public opinion, especially the mood of anti-Dutch sentiments in potentially “dangerous” places. As Rinkes had argued, the vernacular press was transmitter of social feelings and sentiments, and the *IPO* was supposed to be the thermometer to measure such social temperatures. In the years preceding the revolts, *IPO* had continued to produce weekly summaries, and its issues had in fact gotten thicker after 1923. But it turned out that regardless of their size, thick press summaries had proved useless in helping the government detect signs of impending communist revolts.

As symbol of the Ethical Policy, Balai Poestaka was faulted for yet another failing. Bertram Schrieke,²⁹² a professor of sociology at the University of Batavia from 1924 to 1929, a specialist on Islam and also Advisor on Native and Arab Affairs, saw Balai Poestaka's "failure" as a consequence of the ethical policy and by-product of Balai Poestaka's progressive mission to "uplift" the natives. In essence Schrieke blamed the expansion of indigenous education. He contended that school education for indigenous people produced followers of the communist movement, and that it was precisely the teachers of such schools who were among those actively involved in the uprisings.²⁹³ This line of argument naturally deepened the negative view that was emerging of Balai Poestaka since it was responsible for providing "safe" reading materials for students of indigenous schools.

An additional administrative measure to curb excessive press was reconsidered. The recent implementation of a judiciary measure, "crimes against the public order" or articles 153 *bis* and *ter* of the Penal Code had proved to be insufficient to contain political radicalism. But after a series of discussions among high level of colonial authorities, all fingers seemed to be pointing to the failure of the Ethical Policy. The dominant view coming out of many evaluations in the secret colonial documents was that the Ethical Policy, which was supposed to guide and supervise the indigenous population on the path of progress, had instead had "negative" effects on society. This view also questioned the effectiveness of Balai Poestaka's political role as a cultural advocate and vernacular press watchdog. Consequently, the problem of evaluating Balai Poestaka and reconsidering how to

²⁹² Bertram J. O. Schrieke served in the Indies as a language officer at the advisor for native affairs (1917-1920), adjunct advisor at the advisor for native affairs (1920-1922), curator at Royal Batavian Society (1923-1924), a law college professor (1924-1929), and director of education and worship (1929-1934).

²⁹³ Bertram Schrieke, "The Causes and Effects of Communism on the West Coast of Sumatra," in Bertram Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies: Selected Writings of B. Schrieke, Part I* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve Publishers, 1955), pp. 85-166.

affect successful curbs on the Indies press dominated the government agenda in the late 1920's. As more effective long-term solutions and policies were being weighed, the authorities sought more immediate solutions to the problem of containing political discourses by enacting administrative measures aimed at preventing the vernacular press from stirring up public opinion and social disorder.

Doubts on the Cultural Project

In the period before the communist uprisings, Balai Poestaka's cultural project enjoyed sufficient support from the Netherlands. On July 25, 1924, the Council of Netherlands Indies issued advisory reports to the Netherlands government on colonial matters, one of which regarded cultural policy, specifically Balai Poestaka's activities in countering the communist movement's influence and propaganda in the society. The Council of Netherlands Indies contended that distributing "appropriate" reading matters could be an effective counter-propaganda against the radical nationalist movement.

The Council considers the Bureau of Popular Literature's dissemination of useful reading materials (especially periodicals like the monthly *Sri Poestaka* and the weekly *Pandji Poestaka*) to be a workable instrument, not for directly counteracting the excesses of the Native press, but rather for mitigating their damaging consequences. For counter-propaganda against extremists, such issues should not be underestimated, of course; but the practical significance of this lies in the indigenous reading public, which is rapidly increasing and is slowly welcoming attractive forms to learn, to make it understand that in the world there are other things to buy than the purely negative and destructive

slogans carried in part by the native press. Such reading is therefore a useful counterbalance.²⁹⁴

This view of Balai Poestaka was consistent with the strategy Rinkes had tried to realize through the institution. Rinkes had successfully persuaded the Governor-General not to make Balai Poestaka a mere organ for government propaganda, since he was convinced that the goal of stamping out “subversive” publications would be much better achieved by maintaining oligopolistic control over the book market and enabling Balai Poestaka to secure hegemony over schooled indigenous youth. A close evaluation of developments in the Indies publishing industry reveals, however, that such hegemony was never actually realized. .

A statement from Balai Poestaka itself reveals its vulnerable position in the literature market during the colonial period. In October 1948, three years after Indonesia declared independence from the Netherlands, the state publishing house and bureau for popular literature released a thirty-five-page booklet detailing its history and development in the late colonial period. It described its accomplishment in the field of literature as an institution that fostered the creation of modern Indonesian

²⁹⁴ Advises van de raad van Nederlandsch-Indië, July 25, 1924, No. IX. Afschrift. Mr. 1924 no. 586x, in R. C. Kwantes (ed.), *De Ontwikkeling van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlandsch-Indië (Bronnenpublicatie), Tweede stuk, medio 1923-1928*, p. 80.

Ten slotte vestigt de Raad de aandacht op een in de stukken niet ter sprake gebracht punt, dat voor de onderhavige aangelegenheid indirect van groot belang schijnt. Als een werkzaam middel, niet om excessen der Inlandsche pers rechtstreeks tegen te gaan, maar wel om de schadelijke gevolgen daarvan te temperen, beschouwt het College de verspreiding van nuttige leesstof door den dienst der Volkslectuur, inzonderheid de uitgifte van periodieken zooals de Sri Poestaka (maandblad) en de Pandji Poestaka (weekblad). Voor contra-propaganda tegenover gestook van extremistische zijde kunnen dergelijke uitgaven natuurlijk niet dienen, maar de practische beteekenis daarvan is hierin gelegen, dat het lezend Inlandsch publiek – hetwelk snel toeneemt – gaandeweg in aantrekkelijken vorm leert begrijpen, dat er in de wereld nog wel iets anders te koop is dan de louter negatieve en destructieve leuzen, waarop het door een deel der Inlandsche pers steeds onthaald wordt. Die lectuur vormt dus een nuttig tegewicht.

literature. Towards the end of the booklet, however, it describes a challenge that Balai Poestaka faced in the last two decades of Dutch colonial era.

Since 1924 the Chinese-owned publishers have put out books of fiction in the form of magazines on monthly or bi-monthly basis. These stories are usually about crime, lewdness, and the likes.

In 1939 these stories grew in numbers, and everywhere emerged the type of publishers that produced this kind of “literary journal.” These phenomena shook the society and were talked about in many newspapers and magazines. Even prominent political leaders interfered.²⁹⁵

As stories of “crime and lewdness” grew popular among Dutch Indies consumers of novels and newspapers, Balai Poestaka’s position in the popular literature and journalism markets grew increasingly weak. Chinese-Malay novels of the time were, by contrast, clearly dominant. More specifically, crime and detective stories enjoyed a wide audience. For instance, in the early years of the twentieth century, the popular writer Lie Kim Hok (1853-1912) translated numerous Rocambole stories into Malay (presumably from Dutch) and published them in Batavia.²⁹⁶ Rocambole, a fictional adventurer, was the creation of Pierre Alexis Ponson du Terrail in the middle of the nineteenth century. Between 1910 and 1913 Lie put out 53 Rocambole stories, collected in five separate titled volumes.²⁹⁷ These translations of Rocambole opened the gate for adventure novels and crime fiction in the Indies. In addition, in Malay

²⁹⁵ Balai Pustaka, *Balai Pustaka Sewadjarnja 1908-1942*, p. 29.

²⁹⁶ C. W. Watson, “Some Preliminary Remarks on the Antecedents of Modern Indonesian Literature,” *Bijdragen tot Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde*, Vol. 127, No. 4 (1971), p. 418; Nio Joe Lan, *Sastera Indonesia-Tionghoa*, pp. 16, 29, 112.

²⁹⁷ Tio Ie Soei, *Lie Kimhok 1853-1912* (Bandung: L. D. “Good Luck,” 1958), p. 86.

literature, fictional characters such as *Gagaklodra*, *Patjar Merah*, and *Elang Emas*²⁹⁸ had turned into popular heroes in Indonesia from the late 1920s on. Chapter 8 of this dissertation shall be devoted to the creation the popular hero Patjar Merah in particular, which I argue emerged as the byproduct of repressive censorship.

Ironically, the proliferation of non-political newspapers that were consumed for their entertainment value, which Balai Poestaka considered safer precisely because they were non-political, had also given way to the propagation of a sensational kind of literature that Balai Poestaka bemoaned. In the age when crime, scandals, or wretched incidents could be turned into commodities and consumed in massive numbers, it was easy to see why the docile literature that Balai Poestaka promoted was less attractive than, and therefore could not compete with, the Chinese-Malay popular publications.

The passage from Balai Poestaka's booklet that I cite above did not acknowledge this fact, as it did not reveal the names of the "Chinese-owned publishers" or "the literary journals" that the bureau found disturbing. It did not specify how such "crime and lewdness" stories "shook the whole society," or who the "prominent political leaders" who interfered were. This veiled criticism and vague

²⁹⁸ Examples of popular detective and "adventure" series include *Gagaklodra*, *Patjar Merah*, and *Patjar Koenig*. While *Patjar Merah* and *Patjar Koenig* circulated mainly in the late 1930s and the dawn of the 1940s, *Gagaklodra* series by a popular writer Njoo Cheong Seng continued from 1930 until 1952. Popular "fictional" characters such as *Gagaklodra* and *Patjar Merah* were not produced as a literary series; Njoo Cheong Seng wrote *Gagaklodra* in various journals, whereas for *Patjar Merah* several authors contributed in different occasions. Elizabeth Chandra, "Fantasizing Chinese/Indonesian Hero: Njoo Cheong Seng and the *Gagaklodra* Series," *Archipel*, No. 81 (2011 forthcoming); Noriaki Oshikawa, "*Patjar Merah Indonesia* and Tan Malaka." In the late 1930s detective films such as *Sherlock Holmes* became popular at cinemas as advertisements of newspapers show, while many popular literatures by the Chinese and Indonesians featured "local" "private" detective heroes. For Sumatran writers' adaptation of *Sherlock Holmes*, see Doris Jedamski, "The Vanishing-Act of *Sherlock Holmes* in Indonesia's National Awakening," in Doris Jedamski (ed.), *Chewing Over the West: Occidental Narratives in Non-Western Readings* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 349-379. It is to be noted that Jedamski's piece of Sumatran "rejection" of *Sherlock Holmes* misunderstands the reason why and how the "criminal" heroes, such as *Patjar Merah* and *Elang Emas*, were conceived. Considering peranakan Chinese popular literature was widely read even among Muslims in Sumatra, it is safe to assume that they were the imitation of Njoo Cheong Seng's *Gagaklodra*. I owe this point to Elizabeth Chandra. For the discussion of how Njoo Cheong Seng conceived and developed the figure of "criminal" hero, see Chandra's article on *Gagaklodra*.

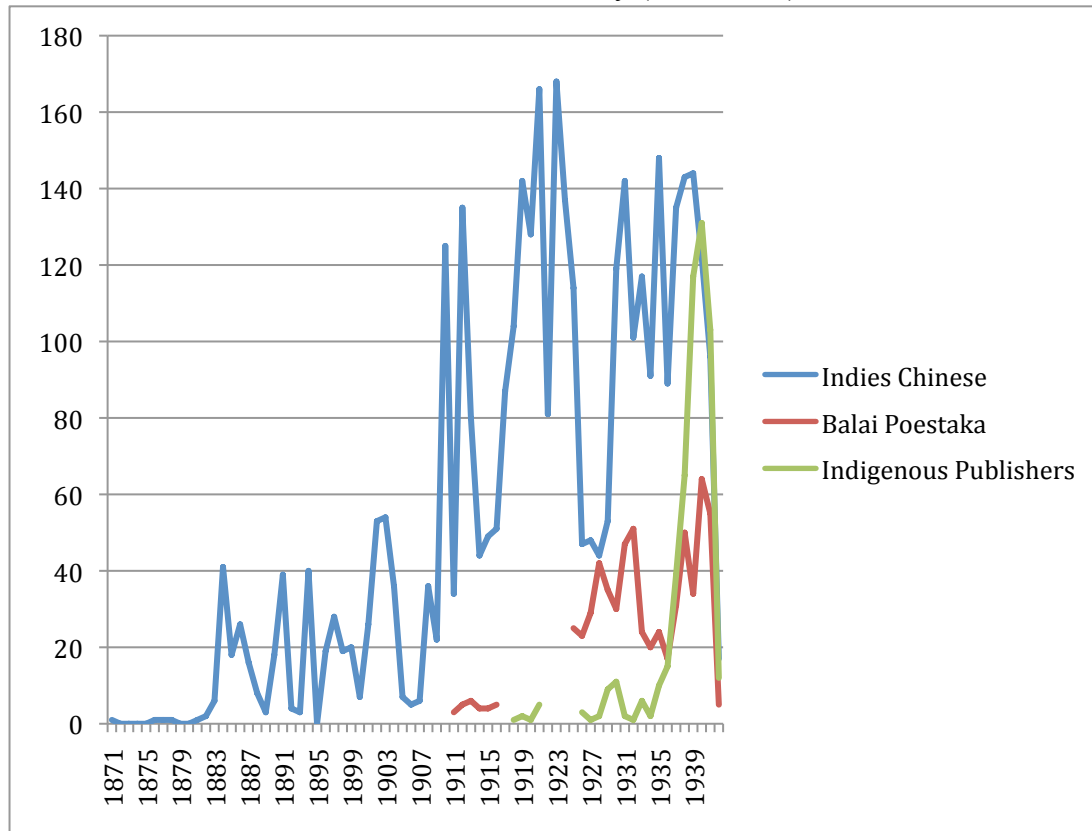
allusions suggest the vulnerability of Balai Poestaka as a counter-force – a cultural (constructive), as opposed to legal (repressive), censorship – against “undesirable” influence in the society. In the end, as the unforeseen communist uprisings underscored, the cultural project of Balai Poestaka had failed to achieve hegemony or dominance in the publishing market.

A look at publication statistics of the period also shows that popular literature and popular journalism attracted a wide range of readership in the 1920s and 1930s and overwhelmed state-sponsored literature. As my computation of published books – Table 5-2: The Number of Malay Publications (1871-1942) – shows (although it is far from complete), Chinese-Malay publications began circulating in the late nineteenth century, and continued to grow in the 1910s through the 1930s with steady numbers of new books and literary journals. Balai Poestaka began regularly publishing its books in the middle of the 1920s, while private indigenous publishers began to produce books in sizeable number in the late 1930s. Throughout this period, Balai Poestaka’s publications never exceeded the number of private publications, especially those by the Chinese. In noting that “(i)n 1939 these kinds of stories grew in numbers, and everywhere emerged this type of publishers,” Balai Poestaka’s report cited earlier refers to the indigenous private publishers, which at that point were trying to mirror the Chinese-owned publishers and their products by publishing their own the monthly literary journals and detective stories. By 1940 and 1941 when the threat of war was looming, the output by private indigenous publishers exceeded those of the Chinese, and together the Chinese and indigenous private publications overwhelmed Balai Poestaka’s books.

Clearly then, Balai Poestaka had difficulties in competing with what the colonial authorities called “wild,” and widely popular literary publications by Indies Chinese as well as indigenous publishers. While Balai Poestaka disapproved of

sensational stories produced in considerable number by Chinese-owned publishers, the fact remains that in terms of market share and popularity it never won the competition. In the beginning in the late 1910s, Balai Poestaka's cultural project already faced a significant challenge. The shaky foundation of its self-proclaimed hegemony (over indigenous school youths) begs reevaluation in terms of its efficiency as a mechanism of censorship. To understand what was really going on with Balai Poestaka in the 1920s, one needs to examine its financial status and the fate of press monitoring that it was carrying out.

Table 5-2: The Number of Publications in Malay (1871-1942)



[My computation is based on the following sources: Salmon, *Literature in Malay by the Chinese in Indonesia*; Balai Pustaka, *Balai Pustaka*; G. Ockeloen, *Catalogus dari Buku-Buku yang Diterbitkan di Indonesia, 1937-1941, Djilid 2: Buku dalam Bahasa Melaju, Djawa, d.l.l* (Bandung: G. Kolff & Co., 1950). The actual number is attached as the appendix at the end of this chapter.]

Balai Poestaka's Money Troubles

Balai Poestaka's cultural project required abundant resources. Because of its nature, it needed heavy subsidies from the government, which presented a drain on the government budget, especially when it was hit by economic recessions. In addition to changing political circumstances, at the end of the Ethical era, the government's financial burden that had accumulated over the years weakened the bargaining position of Balai Poestaka.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the bureau claimed that it could cope well with the growing numbers of vernacular newspapers and periodicals, which needed to be monitored on the regular basis. The number of newspapers listed in *IPO* jumped from 67 in 1918, to 175 in March 1927, and to 265 in September 1929. In August 1937, the number reached 472, which means an increase of more than seven times in twenty years. However, in 1927 when discussion about the reorganization of the institution took place, Balai Poestaka proposed that it simplify the *IPO* both in terms of form and content, because there were too many papers and periodicals (between 250 and 300) it had to deal with every week.²⁹⁹ As this discussion indicates, it had become impossible for Balai Poestaka to keep monitoring all of the vernacular press. The reason was simple – there were too many newspapers, and Balai Poestaka did not have enough personnel to handle their growing number year after year.

This reality conflicted with Balai Poestaka's own claim, that *IPO* regularly monitored 200 publications of the vernacular press,³⁰⁰ a figure that did not seem to reflect the actual number of papers and periodicals it monitored either in the 1920s or the 1930s. Making the press lists in *IPO* was an easy task, because all copies of the press were sent to Balai Poestaka. However such regularly published lists did not

²⁹⁹ Mr. 2246/27.

³⁰⁰ In December 1925, for instance, 198 periodicals were listed in *IPO*. See Balai Poestaka's pamphlet, Brongdeest, *Bureau voor de Volkslectuur*, p. 21.

reflect the actual monitoring activity by Balai Poestaka. It was almost impossible to read all copies of the papers and make summaries of them. In reality, no more than 60 publications were cited and actually summarized in *IPO*. Moreover, while the number of newspapers grew in the 1930s, the number of pages of each *IPO* issue actually decreased after 1932, and only approximately 10 newspapers were cited in it. The Press Bureau division of Balai Poestaka seemed to have selectively monitored and made summaries, rather than reviewing all papers. It relied in particular on major vernacular newspapers, which were considered important and risky for the Indies' security and order. In fact, even though the newspapers under Balai Poestaka's scrutiny changed from time to time, only about 10 representative newspapers were constantly reviewed and summarized throughout the twenty-three year history of its press monitoring.

With the declining function and credibility of the press survey, Balai Poestaka's activities began to decline as a whole. Changes in expenditures and the number of employees of Balai Poestaka clearly reflect how inconsequential the institution had become for the political security. Once its importance declined, the Indies government had no reason to allot huge funds for Balai Poestaka. The ups and downs of its expenses in the 1920s and 1930s support this argument. Its budget grew rapidly in its first five years, that is, from f 184,264 in 1918 to f 523,192 in 1923, with a peak of f 741,521 in 1921. For three years after 1924 its budget stabilized around f 530,000. Thanks to its aggressive promotion by T. J. Lekkerkerker,³⁰¹ who was the director of Balai Poestaka from 1927 to 1929, its budget jumped to f 631,558

³⁰¹ Lekkerkerker was known as an expert in agricultural engineering and had been affiliated with the Department of Agricultural Trade and Handicrafts before being appointed as a new director of Balai Poestaka. In the 1910s he introduced and promoted agricultural education in the Indies. As the director of Balai Poestaka, he got the institution more efficient, and made two subdivisions – linguistic and administrative sections. His career as the agricultural engineering, see Suzanne Moon, *Technology and Ethical Idealism: A History of Development in the Netherlands East Indies* (Leiden: CNWS, 2007), p. 112.

in 1928, and in 1930 reached f 696,241 as a counter-propaganda organ against the communist movement. But after 1932 the budget started to fall, from f 568,200 in 1932 to f 258,070 in 1936, while the years of 1938 and 1939 saw a slight recovery to more than f 300,000.³⁰² The most striking point to be made from these figures is that its budget rapidly dropped after 1932 following the reorganization of all colonial institutions as a result of the Great Depression. If one looks at personnel expenses, this tendency becomes clearer. In the beginning of the 1920s, personnel expenses were around f 200,000 to f 250,000, while from 1928 on they exceeded f 300,000, and in 1931 recorded f 359,200. After 1933, however, personnel expenses shrunk to f 244,300 in 1934, and f 133,100 in 1938.

The salaries of the employees, on the other hand, remained stable. For instance, the salary for the chairman was f 1,150 a month in 1927.³⁰³ As for the administrative staff, a chief of the board earned f 400 per month, and a first-class bookkeeper earned the same amount, while clerks earned f 45 to f 75 a month. Chiefs of Press and Translation Bureaus earned f 625 per month, which was the highest salary for non-administrative staff, whereas others like editors earned f 110 a month. These figures are taken from 1927, but the salaries themselves did not change that much throughout the colonial era. If so, it is logical to assume that the decrease in Balai Poestaka's expenses reflected a reduction of the number of staff. In fact, its employees dropped from around 50 persons in 1923 to less than 30 persons after 1933. Moreover, the number of Dutch committee members of Balai Poestaka, which was 36

³⁰² Figures are taken from *Handelingen van de Volksraad*, 1920 to 1939, and Mr. 1436x/33. It is difficult to trace the real budget of Balai Poestaka, for even *Handelingen van de Volksraad* gives different figures for the same years over its 20 years statistics. For convenience's sake, I have picked up the highest figures for each year from *Handelingen van de Volksraad*, otherwise relying on figures from Mr. 1436x/33.

³⁰³ Rinkes' initial salary when he was appointed as the chairperson of Balai Poestaka was f 1,500 per month. For the comparison, G. A. J. Hazeu, who was reappointed as the advisor for Native and Arab Affairs in 1917 in replacement of Rinkes, earned f 2,000 a month. Vb. 22 Dec. 17 no. 45.

in 1921, shrunk rapidly to 8 in 1931 and 4 in 1940.³⁰⁴ The figures for personnel expenses of the institution show that the number of its employees was 109 in 1928, 137 in 1930, 93 in 1935, and 87 in 1936.³⁰⁵

The problem of managing Balai Poestaka efficiently became more acute in the post-Ethical era. Unlike in 1928, when the bureau had briefly regained a higher profile as a counterweight to communist activities, by the time of the post-Ethical area, the economic situation of the Indies had changed drastically as the Great Depression took its toll and forced a general cutback of the government budget. Balai Poestaka sections targeted for staff reductions were the Translation and Press Bureaus, which were responsible for putting together *IPO*. In 1932 its journal *Sri Poestaka* was discontinued due to its huge deficit.³⁰⁶ The journal was initially published to stamp out “wild” literature and vernacular press, but by this point it was considered ineffective and wasteful, partly because it failed to compete with the “wild” publications on the market, and in part because the Indies state had adopted *persbreidelordonnantie* (Press Curbing Ordinance, hereafter *persbreidel*) since 1931. Balai Poestaka continued to decline throughout the 1930s.

In late 1933, a rumor spread that Balai Poestaka was to be taken over by the Dutch private publisher Kolff & Co. in Batavia.³⁰⁷ This rumor originated from the proposal made by the director of Department of Education and Religious Affairs, B. Schrieke, in order to “help” his subordinate institution, Balai Poestaka, so that it could maintain its cultural activities. He argued that Balai Poestaka needed to become self-sufficient, because it had been losing a large amount of money.

³⁰⁴ *Regeerings-Almanak*, 1918-1940.

³⁰⁵ *Handelingen van de Volksraad*, 1920-1939. But the actual number of employees seemed to be higher than these figures. Balai Poestaka’s annual reports recorded that it had 250 employees. Balai Poestaka, *Resultaten van voor de Volkslectuur 1927* (Batavia: Balai Poestaka, 1928), p. 5.

³⁰⁶ *Handelingen van de Volksraad*, 1933-34 Bijlagen.

³⁰⁷ Mr. 1436x/33.

Table 5-3: Financial Trend of Balai Poestaka, 1921-1932

Year	Expenses			Income
	Personnel	Material	Total	
1921	321,855	419,666	741,521	105,000
1922	259,866	242,656	502,522	126,769
1923	249,291	273,901	523,192	128,001
1924	207,688	219,353	427,041	193,946
1925	236,251	265,809	502,060	177,733
1926	283,540	289,565	573,105	241,811
1927	272,634	268,716	541,339	263,142
1928	299,236	331,882	631,558	254,296
1929	328,236	322,637	693,241	261,545
1930	331,453	361,788	693,241	261,545
1931	327,043	323,593	650,636	241,582
1932	292,700	275,500	568,200	175,000
Total	3,410,222	3,595,066	7,005,288	2,425,100
Loss			-4,580,179	

[Source: Mr. 1436x/33]

The total loss was *f* 4,580,179 in the twelve years between 1921 and 1932. While the total budget from 1921 until 1932 was *f* 7,005,288, which consisted of *f* 3,410,22 for personnel expenses and *f* 3,595,066 for material ones, the total income for the same period was only *f* 2,425,109.³⁰⁸ Schrieke disclosed that over the period of twelve years the Press Bureau and the Translation Bureau had spent *f* 50,000 and *f* 20,000, respectively, and suggested that the expenses of these two bureaus should be cut back. As shown earlier, the chiefs of these two bureaus earned the highest salaries among the non-administrative staffs, because their jobs involved important political functions. Due to reasons mentioned above, the budget of the Press Bureau was cut, and this in turn led to the huge cutback in *IPO*.

³⁰⁸ Mr. 1436x/33.

The declining political role of *IPO* and the budget tightening forced Balai Poestaka to reorganize itself, resulting in the reduction of its cultural and political projects and activities. The number of people's reading rooms, of books being checked out, and of readers who accessed Balai Poestaka all gradually declined in 1930s. Despite the claim by literary scholars that it enjoyed a hegemonic position in the field of publication and literature,³⁰⁹ Balai Poestaka faced a bleak destiny, which its founding father Rinkes had never expected.

Between Monitoring and Curbing

Its failure as a truly hegemonic institution notwithstanding, Rinkes had been nominally successful in building Balai Poestaka into a major cultural agency in colonial Indies. Another of Rinkes' projects, effective press monitoring, had by contrast been faced with opposition from the beginning, as questions were immediately raised about the efficacy of Rinkes' approach.³¹⁰ As early as in the late 1910s and the early 1920s, when Balai Poestaka's press-monitoring system by Balai Poestaka was first operationalized, many discussions took place among high Dutch officials on the excesses of the press and how to deal with them. In particular, discussions centered around whether new administrative measures should be introduced or criminal laws improved. For a time, the general mood supported the view that the existing penal code would be adequately effective in supervising the vernacular press.

The strongest voice opposing this viewpoint was raised by the Governor-General Van Limburg Stirum (1916-1921). Van Limburg Stirum was known as for

³⁰⁹ Setiadi, "Kolonialisme dan Budaya, Balai Pustaka di Hindia Belanda," pp. 23-41; Jedamski, "Balai Pustaka," pp. 23-46.

³¹⁰ For a detail study on censorship policy debate in the 1920s, Maters, *Van zachte wenk tot harde hand*, pp. 137-149; 156-169.

the administrative reforms he had initiated in the Indies, such as the introduction of People's Council (*Volksraad*) and decentralization. Yet, despite his reformist reputation, he had been bothered by the development of the vernacular press. After taking office in 1916, Van Limburg Stirum wrote several proposal letters to the Minister for Colonies, Th. B. Pleijte (1913-1918). In a letter date on October 20, 1916, he castigated the vernacular press and signaled tougher attitude towards it:

I have a lousy impression of the native press, which is always biased against the government, and never says a word of appreciation for our officials. [...] I had prepared a wire giving you my views on the matter. In it I added my view that so long as the natives think in this damnable way about what's reported in their press, they will have nothing to contribute to the future of the country.³¹¹

About half a year later on April 4, 1917, just before Balai Poestaka began its press monitoring, Van Limburg Stirum wrote another letter to Pleijte. In the letter he noted that major socio-political changes had affected the Royal Decree of March 19, 1906 concerning press regulations, which had weakened administrative control over the press. He went on to say that it was the time for the Indies government to introduce new ways to rein in the vernacular press excess. Implicitly he expressed misgivings on the effectiveness of press monitoring that Rinkes proposed. Instead, Van Limburg

³¹¹ Een brief van 20 okt. 1916 (particulier; archief Pleijte) schreef Van Limburg Stirum aan Pleijte uit Buitenzorg, in R. C. Kwantes (ed.), *De Ontwikkeling van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlandsch-Indië (Bronnenpublicatie) Eerste stuk 1917-medio 1923*. Groningen: H. D. Tjeenk Willink, 1975), p. 1.

Van de inlansche pers heb ik de allernaarste indruk, scheeve voorstelling van zaken is regel, nimmer een woord van waardeering voor de ambtenaren [...]. Ik had een telegram klaar om u te zeggen hoe ik hierover denk eraan toevoegende dat als de mentaliteit van het volk naar de persuitingen beoordeeld moet worden te vreezen is dat het niet in staat zal zijn iets bij te dragen tot den vooruitgang van dit land.

Stirum recommended that the Minister for Colonies introduce a license system, or at least increase the possibility of prosecution by criminal law.³¹²

This recommendation however was not realized, because not only Pleijte but also his successor as the Minister for the Colonies, A. W. F. Idenburg (1918-1919), did not approve of Van Limburg Stirum's idea. On June 14, 1919, Idenburg who was a former Governor-General in the Indies wrote to Van Limburg Stirum, saying that he was not willing to take up the latter's proposal for a license system in order to curb press excesses. Idenburg recommended instead that two new articles be added to the Penal Code, which should suffice for the purpose. The intention was to make the Penal Code more extensive and forceful toward the press, that is to deter excesses with the threat of stiff penalties. For that, Idenburg suggested adding articles 483a and 484a, which read "Whoever publishes text or imagery after receiving a written warning from the Governor-General deeming the material as being of criminal nature shall be punished with imprisonment not exceeding one year and four months or fine for a maximum of 300 guilders."³¹³

Van Limburg Stirum was not satisfied with Idenburg's recommendation. After Idenburg was succeeded as Minister for the Colonies by S. de Graef (1919-1925), he sent another petition with a new proposal on April 3, 1920. He proposed that the Minister of the Colonies consider the possibility of temporarily suspending the printer responsible for publishing troubling articles, using as reference the Printing Presses Ordinance that was just introduced in the British Straits Settlements.³¹⁴ Yet, once again his proposal was turned down.

³¹² Gouverneur-Generaal (Van Limburg Stirum) aan Minister van Koloniën (Pleijte), April 4, 1917, in No. 272/1. Vb. 14 juni 1919 no. 26 in Kwantes, *De ontwikkeling, I*, pp. 1-10.

³¹³ Minister van Koloniën (Idenburg) aan Gouverneur-Generaal (Van Limburg Stirum), June 14, 1919, No. 26/859. Minuut. Vb. 14 juni 1919 no. 26 in Kwantes, *De ontwikkeling, I*, pp. 128-132, especially, pp. 130-131.

³¹⁴ Gouverneur-Generaal (Van Limburg Stirum) aan Minister van Koloniën (De Graeff), April 3, 1920, No. 31a/4x. Vb. 15 juni 1920 no. 2, in Kwantes, *De ontwikkeling, I*, pp. 261-265.

After Van Limburg Stirum was retired in 1921, Fock (1921-1926) took the position of Governor-General. He was an experienced politician and his impressive curriculum vita shows that he served as a parliament member of the Dutch House of Representatives (1901-1905, 1913-1920), the Minister of the Colonies (1905-1908), and the chairperson of the House of Representatives (1917-1920). Unlike his predecessor, Fock seemed to be of the opinion that the existing criminal law was enough to combat “evil” elements of the press. On February 27, 1922, in a letter to the Prosecutor General G. W. Uhlenbeck (1916-1922), Fock expressed his hesitation at the adaptation of such administrative measures as the suspension of publication or the introduction of license system. He also had misgivings about the addition of articles to the criminal law for the purpose of eradicating press excesses and recommended that it should be considered only if necessary. Fock even questioned if “hate-sowing articles” in the Penal Code were necessary, arguing that although they were established to punish those who expressed feelings of enmity, hatred, or contempt against one or more groups in the Indies, one could not eliminate the possibility that a prosecution under those articles could evoke social condemnation.³¹⁵ His cautious attitude toward curbing excesses of the press was peculiar, given the fact that radical movements had grown and spread in Java since the late 1910s, and many journalists and activist were being penalized under the press offence articles. Moreover, Fock had been under pressure from Dutch conservatives to take additional measures against the Communists.

In the early 1920s, in the eyes of Dutch officials, social disorder became increasingly apparent day by day. This trend corresponded with rapid social change that the Indies was going through. Sensationalism became popular in the press of both

³¹⁵ Wd. gouvernementssecretaris aan Procureur-Generaal (G. W. Uhlenbeck), Feb. 27, 1922, No. 139x geh. Afschrift. Mr. 1922 no. 278x, in Kwantes, *De ontwikkeling*, I, pp. 461-462.

Dutch and Malay languages. The 1920s saw large numbers of new Dutch middle class immigrants arriving in the Indies. This new audience coincided with the rise of market-oriented journalism in the circle of Dutch-language newspapers, which were increasingly characterized by its commercialism, sensationalism, and fear mongering. The Dutch author Couperus, finding himself the target of criticism in the press upon visiting the Indies, described its mob mentality thus:

[It was] the Scornful Press. If the tourist is someone who is more or less well-known – famous or notorious – he will most certainly be attacked by this plague. It is inevitable. “But,” someone tried to comfort me, “you share this with all distinguished people who come to Java: consider all these abusive articles which the editors of many Indies papers have thrown at you as a compliment.”³¹⁶

In his travel account, Couperus appears to be quite comfortable with the advice he cites in this passage: Well-known Westerners being targeted for scornful press attacks should not over-react, and should simply regard such attacks in a different light, as “compliments” on their success.³¹⁷

For many Dutch officials, however, the scornful native press was simply irritating, not flattering. They were especially exasperated with radical political activism and radical political discourse in the press. After taking office as the

³¹⁶ Couperus, *Eastward*, p. 244; I changed the translated word “Indian” to “Indies.” To be precise, since Couperus passed away due to sepsis in July 16, 1923, this travel essay was published posthumously as a book. The travel was arranged and sponsored by *De Haagsche Post* and was originally planned to include a visit to the Indies, China and Japan. But due to unstable political situations in China in 1922 Couperus briefly stopped at Hong Kong after the Indies and went straight to Japan. His travel account on Japan was later published in book form in 1925, and was translated into English in 1926. Louis Couperus, *Nippon* (translated by John De La Valetta) (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1926).

³¹⁷ Couperus’ generous attitude makes sense if one understands the background of his account.

Prosecutor General in 1922, D. G. Wolterbeek Muller (1922-1926) did not waste any time in taking up renewed efforts to rein in political activists that he felt had been operating all too freely. Muller was known as a tough Prosecutor General, especially towards the communist movement. Not satisfied with the punitive measures already at his disposal, Muller openly contemplated instituting more drastic measures for curbing the press. During his five-year tenure, he interned and deported communist leaders such as Tan Malaka, Semaoen,³¹⁸ Darsono, Alimin, Aliarcham, and Mardjohan; and in October 1923 he ordered the arrest of the PKI executive members. On January 23, 1924, he made a proposal to Governor-General Fock to add two articles to the Penal Code, which echoed the suggestion by Idenburg back in 1917. Muller urged “the addition of a temporary censorship in times of tension and the expansion of the hate-sowing articles to include expression on class hatred, which would provide a practical weapon, in the opinion of its proponent, especially against the native press.”³¹⁹ In July 1924 the Council of the Netherlands Indies expressed hesitation to take further actions, saying that at the moment the general political situation of the Indies did not necessitate taking more stringent measures against the press.³²⁰

Between late 1924 and 1926 PKI and its affiliated unions appeared to be pushing for more radical activities. Consequently, anarchic situations due growing incidents of labor unrest emerged in Java and Sumatra. With the party’s encouragement agitation among its base in rural areas increased from s 1925 onward. Threats to public order spread in cities in Central Java, such as Jogjakarta, Soerakarta,

³¹⁸ Gouverneur-generaal (Fock) aan Minister van Koloniën (De Graaff), May 16, 1923, no. 45/1x. Afschrift van minuut. Vb. July 14, 1923 no. 15, in Kwantes, pp. 560-564. Semaoen, after having travelled to China, Russia, Europe and Thailand, was arrested and forced to leave the Indies in August 1923.

³¹⁹ Procureur-Generaal (D. G. Wolterbeek Muller) aan Gouverneur-generaal (Fock), January 23, 1924, in R. C. Kwantes ed., *De Ontwikkeling van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlandsch-Indië (Bronnenpublikatie), Tweede stuk, medio 1923-1928* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1978), pp. 66-71.

³²⁰ Advies van de raad van Nederlandsch-Indië, July 25, 1924, No. IX. Afschrift. Mr. 1924 no. 586x, in Kwantes, *ontwikkeling, I*, pp. 77-81.

and Semarang, as well as in Batavia, Medan and Soerabaja. These developments corresponded with the party's new propaganda in 1926. In its January 2, 1926 issue, the party organ *Api* began publishing quotations from Bakunin in italics on its front page. It had turned Bakunin into its prophet, though Darsono's own advice in 1924 was for "PKI to remember that the Communism of Marx and not the anarchism of Bakunin must govern the party."³²¹

This political development forced the Council to change its attitude regarding the expansion of the Penal Code.³²² In April 1926 the Indies state introduced two additional articles to those concerning "crimes against the public order," known as articles 153 *bis* and *ter*, 154, 155, 156, 157, and 161 *bis* of the Penal Code.³²³ Article 153 *bis* reads:

Whoever deliberately states their opinion by speech, writing, or image, whether by mockery, either explicitly or covertly promoting the disruption of public order, overthrowing or violating the authority of the Netherlands or the Netherlands-Indies government, or inciting thereto, shall be punished with a maximum imprisonment of six years or a maximum fine of three hundred guilders.³²⁴

Article 153 *ter* reads:

³²¹ McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, p. 325.

³²² For a survey of the process of legislation, J. Th. Petrus Bloemberger, *De Communistische Beweging in Nederlandsch- Indië* (Haarlem: H. D. Tjeenk Willink, 1928).

³²³ "*bis*" is a Latin term for a first supplement, and "*ter*" for a second addition.

³²⁴ D. M. G. Koch, *Verantwoording; een halve eeuw in Indonesië*, ('s-Gravenhage: W. Van Hoeve, 1956), pp. 89-90.

Whoever by writing or image, by mockery, either explicitly or covertly promotes or disrupts public order, overthrows or undermines the authority of the Netherlands or the Netherlands Indies government, shall be punished with a maximum imprisonment of five years or a maximum fine of three hundred guilders.

Article 161 *bis* reads:

Whoever intends to disturb the public order or to cause the disruption in the economy, or whether knowingly or unwittingly disturbs public order or disrupts the economic activities, causing or making other people unable to fulfill their obligations, or even after being formally instructed, refuses to perform the labor to which they are bound or obliged by contract, shall be punished with a maximum imprisonment of five years or a maximum fine of one thousand guilders.³²⁵

The additional articles became a practical legal weapon to arrest prominent and radical nationalists from the middle of the 1920s until the end of the colonial era. They pushed Balai Poestaka to change the composition of *IPO*, which was struggling to survive in its role as another weapon against subversive elements of the press. For nearly seven and half years since its birth in 1918, *IPO* had basically kept the same format. Each issue started with a section on “Malay press in Java,” and was followed by sections on “Press in Outer islands,” “Javanese press,” “Extremist press,” “Nationalistic press,” “Religious press,” “Women’s press,” “Minahasa press,” “Neutral press,” “Trade Union press,” “Arabic press,” and “Chinese-Malay press.” I Without

³²⁵ Koch, *Verantwoording*, p. 137.

notice or explanation, this format changed in May 1926, and the new order was; “Religious press,” “Trade Union press,” “Outer islands press,” “Outer islands native journals,” “Native journals in Java,” “Press in Java,” “Arabic press,” “Japanese-Malay press,” “Periodicals in the Netherlands,” and “Chinese-Malay press.” With the new format, *IPO* increased in size and was now packed with summaries of vernacular press. However, this change was not accompanied with any new methodology, and consumption of *IPO* proceeded much in the same pattern as before.

On the surface the new political weapon appeared to be more effective than the old one. The additional articles in the Penal Code successfully paralyzed the central command of the Communist Party. But these additional measures in the end helped trigger new uprisings in West Java in 1926 and in West Sumatra in 1927, uprisings that had been opposed even by the chairperson of the Comintern in Southeast Asia, Tan Malaka, who felt them to be premature.

Soon after the implementation of the new articles of the Penal Code, local journalists expressed their confusion in the press.

Persdelict is like a flood all day long. [...]

Why then do such harsh rules still need to be applied in the Indies? [...]

With the existing articles, the press already sees its pathway very narrow, now with the new articles, the ability of the press to express itself will be even more constricted.³²⁶

³²⁶ “Moeloet pers semakin dikekang: Artikel 153 bis dan 153 ter moentjoel lagi,” *Pewart Deli*, April 23, 1926.

Persdelict bagaikan bandjir sepandjang hari. [...]

Apakah sebabnja di Hindia masih berlakoe atoean atoean jang begitoe keras? [...]

Dengan artikel artikel jang soedah ada sadja, memang kaoem pers soedah merasa amat sempit perdjalanannja, sekarang ditambah lagi artikel artikel baroe jang njata boleh menambahi sempitnja pers bersoeara.

Naturally, local journalists questioned the intention of the colonial government in adding new articles. They were not aware of the long series of correspondence on how to deal with press excesses that had been taking place among high colonial officials since the middle of the 1910s. On the one hand, the existing *persdelict* laws for them were already quite suppressive, and they wanted more independence and freedom of expression. On the other hand, they knew that they had to live with the new articles of the Penal Code, and that freedom of the press was illusory. Even after the communist uprisings were crushed and the party was banned, these additional articles continued to be invoked against those who supported the nationalist movement.³²⁷ In the end, the authorities became less and less tolerant of political activism of any kind.

Contrary to the hopes of the Indies colonial authorities, one can say that the new laws also failed their target as radical newspapers continued to print their opinions, and, most importantly, the communist uprisings broke out at the end of 1926 and the beginning of 1927 despite the new laws. The uprisings undoubtedly altered the political circumstances concerning press monitoring as the Indies government lost its confidence in the effectiveness of this activity. Ironically, a person nicknamed “Rapp” who had worked for *IPO* confirmed the ineffectiveness of the press survey. In its September 1928 issue, *IPO* carried a summary of an article by the Medan-based daily *Pewart Deli*. The article hinted that the Indies state would reassess and change the weekly journal *IPO* by Balai Poestaka, and that the objectivity of the survey would be lost. A “footnote” to this summary written by a *IPO* censor confirmed that the survey was tasked with covering more than 200 newspapers, weeklies, and other

³²⁷ This is an observation by an activist who spoke up at the meeting of Bandoeng branch of Association of Political Organizations of the Indonesia People (*Pemoefakatan Perhimpoeanan-perhimpoeanan Politik Kebangsaan Indonesia*, PPPPKI) on October 7, 1928. Mr. 1017/1928.

periodicals, that it had been gradually failing to review all of them, and that the writers of the summary never exercised objective survey.³²⁸

Coincidentally, when this footnote was published, an intense debate regarding the press was taking place under the guidance of Governor-General De Graeff (1926-1931).³²⁹ The core of this debate centered on whether or not to adopt administrative measure against excesses of the press, which the colonial authorities were hesitant to do since the Press Act of 1906 was introduced. Finally, new administrative measures appeared to be imminent. On June 1, 1928, the Council of the Indies advised on the draft ordinance with regards to restrictions of freedom of the press on certain newspapers and periodicals, and proposed a few amendments to underline the exceptional character of the temporary suppression of certain newspapers.³³⁰ On July 3, 1928, acting on orders from De Graeff, the first secretary of the government sent the outlines of the final decision on the regulation of the press to the Director of Justice, J. J. Schrieke. His plan revealed that print materials that might endanger public order were to be curbed and that the regulatory measures would include a ban on printing, publishing, and distributing such publications.³³¹

Threatened with becoming irrelevant, Balai Poestaka did not quietly sit back, but attempted to regain its clout in the colonial institutional arrangement. Although the credibility of its press survey was almost gone, those who were attached to this institution still tried to regain the government confidence in *IPO*, by trying to make it more suitable for its purpose. From October to November 1928, Van der Plas (the

³²⁸ *Pewarta Deli*, September 25, 1928, in *IPO* 1928, p. 604.

³²⁹ Before being appointed as the Governor-General, de Graeff served as official general secretary (1895-1905), first government secretary (1905-1913), general secretary (1913/1914), member of the Council of Netherlands Indies (1914-1916), vice-president of the Council of Netherlands Indies (1917/1918), and Dutch ambassador to Washington (1919-1926).

³³⁰ Advises van de raad Nederlandsch-Indië, 1 Juni 1928, in Mr. 685x/1928, and also in Kwantes (ed.), *De Ontwikkeling van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlandsch-Indië (Bronnenpublicatie). Derde stuk 1928 - Aug. 1933* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff/Bouma's Boekhuis, 1981), pp. 58-61.

³³¹ Eerste gouvernementssecretaris aan de directeur van justitie (J. J. Schrieke), July 3, 1928, Mr. 262x/1928, in Kwantes, *De Ontwikkeling, III*, pp. 69-72.

advisor for the Native Affairs), J. Hardeman (the Director for Education and Religious Affairs), H. A. Helb (the first secretary of the government), and Lekkerkerker (the senior officer of Balai Poestaka) organized a series of discussions on how to reorganize the press survey. In his letter on October 29, 1928, Van der Plas pointed out that the weekly survey of Chinese and Chinese-Malay press by the Office for Chinese Affairs was better organized (meaning topically categorized) and carried a more systematic overview of the press than the one prepared by Balai Poestaka.³³² This point suggests that the demands for and consumption of press surveillance had shifted from a summary to an overview format. From the beginning in 1917, *IPO* was known to focus on carrying various kinds of news summaries of the vernacular press, whereas the Office for Chinese Affairs developed regular press overviews according to topical headings. Defenders of *IPO* argued that it was more important to show what kind of articles individual newspapers carried than to issue the compact overviews according to selected topics that the Office for Chinese Affairs put out. *IPO*'s "rich" contents allowed readers who knew which newspaper and person to watch to keep an eye on those publications. It did not provide any political context, but rather passed on indigenous "voices" to keeping state officials updated on the political temperature in the Indies. Reading *IPO* guaranteed sufficient information on indigenous "nationalist" and "extremist" activists, organizations, and movements without reading the actual vernacular newspapers.³³³ The lesson that communist uprisings taught, however, was that *IPO*'s press summary failed to provide the information needed to better predict what would happen in the future. In its voluminous pages, the numerous indigenous

³³² "Wekelyksch persoverzicht Inlandsche en Maleisch-Chineesche pers," in Mr. 1046/28. The way in which the Office for Chinese Affairs classified and summarized Chinese press, see Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

³³³ *IPO* has contributed to reconstruct Indonesian nationalist history in the postcolonial era, although it may have some Dutch bias on indigenous movement as Lekkerkerker acknowledged in his report. It is convenient to have the summary of vernacular press, considering that many vernacular newspapers from colonial days were not available any longer, and it can be read like another colonial documents.

“voices” that *IPO* had hoped to capture for its readers became instead vague “noises” for colonial officials, who became lost in the flood of information provided and thus were prone to read the summaries only selectively depending on their interests. Consequently, it appears that the colonial authorities decided that an organized press overview – rather than simply a press summary – would be more useful for understanding what was going on with regard to social movements among the indigenous population of the Indies.

Nine months later, on August 27, 1929, Lekkerkerker submitted to Governor-General De Graeff a proposal for change at Balai Poestaka. While admitting that the current level of Balai Poestaka’s staffing was inferior to that of the Office for Chinese Affairs, he pledged that the institution would provide adequate education and sufficient levels of fluency in the Indies indigenous languages to enable the new bureaucratic staff to meet the emergent demands. He also suggested that it was possible for Balai Poestaka to make a better and more organized press survey. His argument essentially was that reading *IPO* was still worth it, since Balai Poestaka was now committed to improving its quality.³³⁴ But Lekkerkerker’s proposal turned out to be difficult to realize; *IPO* did not show any major reorganization of the way it summarized the vernacular press, and the size of *IPO* remained as “thick” as before. Officials continued to find it difficult to extract relevant information from *IPO*’s voluminous pages, and no fundamental improvement of the situation occurred. It had proved a little too late to reconstruct *IPO*. Once confidence and trust in its press monitoring capabilities were lost, *IPO* could not recover, and the age of press monitoring began drawing to a close.

³³⁴ “Mogelykheid van een meer overzichtelyke indeeling van het persoverzicht,” De Hoofdamttenaar voor de Volkslectuur en aanverwante aangelegenheden (Lekkerkerker) aan Gouverneur-Generaal (De Graeff) in Mr. 819x/29.

The decline of the political role of Balai Poestaka and its *IPO* reflected the institutional change of the Indies state that had been gradually taking place since 1919. With the government decree of September 24, 1919, the General Investigation Service (*Dienst der Algemeene Recherche*, ARD) was established within the police force. This office was expected to alert the Prosecutor General of problems in the Indies, and to advise him on directives and information that ought to be provided to the regional investigation service.³³⁵ Its monthly survey *Politiek-Politioneel Overzicht* (*PPO*, Political Policing Survey) gained trust among intelligence officers in the 1920s, and especially after the communist uprisings of 1926/1927, it became a must-read item.³³⁶ The publication consisted of five sections: Extremist Movement, National and Islamic Movement, Chinese Movement, Trade Union Movement, and “Abroad.”³³⁷ With a very limited circulation among high-level officials, *PPO* gave concise information on an incident and the place, persons or organizations it involved, but provided no sociological and cultural background information. *PPO* only paid attention to dissidents and threats to the state, as this was the information considered to be sufficient for understanding the political situation in relation to security. Compared to *IPO*, *PPO* gave more concrete and direct information. As the importance of *PPO* increased, it *IPO*’s political role appeared to be effectively over.

As the failure of *IPO*’s reconstruction became evident, discussions concerning press curbing reached the final stage in 1930. In his letter of May 2, 1930, the Director of Justice J. J. Schrieke (1929-1934)³³⁸ introduced a draft ordinance for the purpose of

³³⁵ Shiraishi, “A New Regime of Order,” pp. 47-74.

³³⁶ Harry A. Poeze (ed.), *Politiek-politioneële overzichten van Nederlandsch-Indië: bronnenpublikatie* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1982-1994). This four volume series covers *PPO* from 1927 to 1941.

³³⁷ The format is similar to that of *MMC*.

³³⁸ J. J. Schrieke served at the Indies government as a judicial officer (1909-1913), secretary general officer (1913-1916), adjunct officer for decentralization (1919/1920), principal officer for director of education and worship (1920-1922), government agent in the People’s Council (1922-1928), and director of Justice (1929-1934).

press control. He presented three possible cases in which the ordinance could be invoked: if the tone of the press against the government went beyond the reasonable bounds; if the disturbing writing affected the good understanding (*goede verstandhouding*) of the people; and if one published inaccurate news. But interestingly, Schrieke also outlined some objections to the regulation that he was requesting to be signed into law, and he proposed that certain changes be made. He was of the opinion that measures to curb press excessiveness needed to be placed under the jurisdiction of the preventive police.³³⁹ According to this draft, the final decision on whether or not a certain newspaper needed be suspended was to be made by the Prosecutor General. Two months later, in a report dated on July 4, 1930, the Council of the Netherlands Indies advised against Schrieke's ideas, citing its unease with the apparent government intervention in the freedom of the press that his proposal would signify. "A major act of the government to affect, albeit abusive, press freedom should undoubtedly be seen with the greatest possible precaution for careful and thoughtful use of resources," the Council advised.³⁴⁰

Having received these two different suggestions, in a letter dated on August 17, 1930, Governor-General De Graeff reviewed the exchange of ideas that had been taking place for more than a decade. In his letter to the Minister for the Colonies, De Graeff referred to the Printing Press Ordinance of 1920 in the British Strait Settlements and the Press Act of 1910 in the British India, which introduced political control over the press in the British colonies. Although still asking for the Minister's views, De Graeff made it clear that it was time to contain press excess for the sake of public order, and that he would approve the introduction of administrative measures

³³⁹ Directeur van justitie (J. J. Schrieke) aan gouverneur-generaal (De Graeff), May 2, 1930, Vb. 14 oktober 1930 1r. W22, in Kwantes, *De Ontwikkeling*, pp. 432-435.

³⁴⁰ Advise van de raad van Nederlandsch-Indië, July 4, 1930, Vb. 14 okt. 1930 1r. W22, in Kwantes, *De Ontwikkeling*, pp. 435-437, and the quotation is in p. 436.

against the press on his own authority.³⁴¹ It took one year before his firm decision was realized in the form of *persbreidel* of 1931.

Apolitical Fields

With the end of the Ethical Policy in 1928, Balai Poestaka as a manifestation of the policy was bound to decline as well. It had been a major responsibility of Balai Poestaka to monitor vernacular language newspapers in the Indies since 1917. But after the reorganization of the colonial administration in 1931, Balai Poestaka's budget was significantly reduced and consequently its activities declined, while its regular mail report to the Department of Colonial Affairs since 1932 no longer carried a general survey of local press. "*Algemeen overzicht van de Indonesische, Maleisch-Chineesche en Arabische Pers over October 1931*" ("The general survey of Indonesian, Chinese-Malay and Arabic Press of October 1931") was the last *Algemeen* sent by the mail report under the file number of secret mail report no. 1268 of 1931 (Mr. 1268x/31). From 1932 on, *IPO* became drastically thinner – its pages reduced to less than twenty for each issue. Thus the role of Balai Poestaka's press monitoring was basically terminated

The circumstances around the print world gradually changed in the mid 1920s. While discussions about curbing the press mainly focused on how to stamp out political discourse, indigenous religious, social, educational, and cultural organizations had started to publish their own periodicals, prose works, and school textbooks through their own publishing houses.³⁴²

³⁴¹ Gouverneur-generaal (De Graeff) aan minister van koloniën (De Graeff), Aug. 17, 1930, in Vb. 14 okt. 1930 1r. W22, in Kwantes, *De Ontwikkeling*, pp. 474-481. See also C. F. Yong, *Chinese Leadership and Power in Colonial Singapore* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1992), pp. 308-321.

³⁴² On the development and reorganization of nationalist movement in West Sumatra, which had great impacts on the development of the publishing business in Sumatra, see Audrey Kahin, *Rebellion to Integration*, Chapters 2 and 3.

Trying to find a way out of the colonial anxiety after the unexpected communist uprisings, from September 1927 to March 1928 Ch. O. van der Plas, the temporary acting Adviser for Native Affairs, wrote a series of notes on how to deal with revolutionary propaganda. His instruction was to come up with possible measures to “neutralize and control” the revolutionary propaganda, and in his long memo on this, he proposed a number of measures.³⁴³ He made one important suggestion with regard to print matters, that is, that the government encourage “religious movements and moderate political movements” such as Moehammadijah, Nahdlatol Oelama, Boedi Oetomo, and Taman Siswa, if necessary by giving subsidies. What Van der Plas was proposing was to encourage native religious, social, educational, and cultural activities within a framework that was inoffensive to the colonial government. In so far as people talked about matters pertaining to culture, education, religion, and society in general, which were generally considered outside the realm of politics, authorities were not to intervene. The role of Balai Poestaka was not mentioned at all. This proposal turned out to secure the survival of publications in the 1930s in a major way because it “defined” politically safe field.

The time when the Dutch avidly listened to the voices of the indigenous population was now over. *Persbreidel* opened a new era of political suppression, which was to stamp out radical political discourse. On the surface, Indonesian nationalists and other political activists were being forced to silence themselves on political matters, while engaging in cultural, educational, religious and social activities. As political circumstances concerning people’s voices and print culture changed, new kinds of “public opinion” emerged, which the Indies state did not

³⁴³ “Overzicht van het rapport van Ch. O. van der Plas in voldoening aan Brief 1e Gouvernementssecretaris No. 38x Geheim van 29 Augustus 1927” in Mr. 121x/28. See also “Neutralisering en bestrijding van revolutionaire propaganda onder de inheemse bevolking, in het bijzonder van Java en Madoera. Rapport van Ch. O. van der Plas, hoofdamtenaar t/b van de adviseur voor inlandse zaken, sept. 1927/maart 1928,” in Kwantes, *ontwikkeling*, II, pp. 700-733.

systematically monitor. Meanwhile, popular literature not only persevered, but also broadened its audience.

CHAPTER 6

BOVEN DIGOEL: PROJECTING A NEW SOCIETY

Because the camps were such tiny spots compared to the modernity at large, and reflecting everything, containing everything – the minis of our world – they remain so distinct, so sticking out, and so standing in our way wherever we try to move. The camps were built fast, as fast as only few and only the most modern cities of our time are built: in a matter of weeks. (Rudolf Mrázek)³⁴⁴

On August 30, 1933, Soekarno, already a prominent Indonesian nationalist and leading organizer of the Indonesian Nationalist Party (*Partai Nasional Indonesia*, PNI), wrote a “confidential” letter to the Prosecutor General. Nearly a month earlier on August 1 he had been apprehended in Batavia and was confined in the Soekamiskin prison in West Java for the second time. His letter begins:

The purpose of this [letter] is to respectfully request that I be spared – and with that also my wife and child and my old mother and father – by releasing me from further judicial proceedings or internment. I address myself to you and the Government with the prayer to set me at liberty. I further promise to withdraw from all political activities and live as a quiet citizen to provide for my family by practicing as an architect and engineer, a practice I have very much neglected on account of my political activities. I shall never break my

³⁴⁴ Rudolf Mrázek, “Boven Digoel and Terezín: Camps at the Time of Triumphant Technology,” *East Asian Science, Technology and Society: an International Journal*. Volume 3, Number 2-3 (2009), p. 312.

promise. As a guarantee to that may this letter serve its purpose: were I to commit breach of promise, do then publish these lines and immediately intern me or in one manner or another penalize me. A breach of promise can only harm me: the publication of this letter will surely spell my social death.³⁴⁵

Sukarno's letter betrays anxiety and despair. He had just pledged that he would withdraw from his political life if the colonial government decided against sending him to the internment camp in Boven Digoel. Years later, his pusillanimous words would surprise many Indonesians and historians, as they contradicted the image of a young and fiery nationalist activist that Soekarno had built in the course of his political life since the middle of the 1920s. The arrest itself in 1933 was his second time, and yet this time was different from the first. This time Soekamiskin was not only a place of temporary confinement; he was waiting for the final decision from the Prosecutor General on whether or not he needed to be isolated further from political action by exile outside Java. His fear of being banished to Boven Digoel, the remote internment camp for political prisoners of the Dutch Indies located in western New Guinea, had led him to beg for the Prosecutor General's mercy. It appears that the latter was not moved by his plea and decided to exile him anyway. The place of exile, however, was to be the town of Ende on the island of Flores, not Boven Digoel. The rationale was to keep him apart from the communist prisoners who had been sent to the latter camp, so that he could not influence them. The futility of Soekarno's plea, however, is not what concerns us here. Rather, the point is that Soekarno was so terrified of being banished to Digoel that he was willing to give up his political

³⁴⁵ Sukarno's "confidential" letter to the Prosecutor General on August 30, 1933, in secret mail report, Mr. 1276/1933, translated by B.B. Hering, *From Soekamiskin to Ende* (Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Occasional Paper, No. 1, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1979), p. 154.

aspirations and career. For the purpose of this paper, it can be said that the letter is a good example of how Indonesian nationalists had imagined Digoel.

In the 1930s Indies, Boven Digoel was an “(in)famous” (*terkenal*) place.³⁴⁶ It was also known by another name, *Tanah Merah* (Red Land), initially because of the color of the soil, but later on also because of this title’s association with political leftists, or “reds.” Those who were exiled to Digoel were called “*orang buangan*” (“exiles,” or, literally, “those who are thrown away”). Established after the communist revolts in Java in 1926, Digoel was a colony for those subject to mass internal exile. The colonial government took firm actions to destroy the communist mass following, and 13,000 persons were rounded up as suspects in connection with the revolts. More than 5,000 were placed in temporary preventive detention, of which 4,500 were sentenced to prison after trial. Those who were considered dangerous, particularly key components of the PKI leadership, were penalized severely. As a consequence of the revolts, the government outlawed the PKI and decided to use its power of banishment on a massive scale. It ordered the deportation of 1,308 individuals, including non-communist political activists and family members who desired to accompany the interned spouses and parents. They were sent to a location on the upper reaches of the Digoel River in New Guinea, hence the Dutch name *Boven Digoel* (upper Digoel, hereafter Digoel),³⁴⁷ where no internee would be able to escape from the camp.

Digoel was a place where the internees were supposed to live “away” from Indonesia. It was not exactly a penal colony, nor a concentration camp. It was designed to be a place where “communists” were transplanted from their home communities in order to be placed under close surveillance and “re-educated” by the

³⁴⁶ Oen Bo Tik, *Darah dan Air-Mata di Boven Digoel* (Bandoeng: Boelan Poernama, 1931), p. 2.

³⁴⁷ Rudolf Mrázek, *Sjahrir: Politics and Exile in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1994), p. 128.

authorities. Unlike the standard concept and image of the internment camp – a place of isolation and oppression – the Digoel project had the typical attributes of colonial engineering. The fact that some internees were allowed to bring family members to Digoel suggests that the authorities intended to let the internees have some degree of “normal” life there. In fact, none in Digoel was physically abused or directly murdered, as in the German concentration camps.³⁴⁸

Legally, internees were not “criminal.” The Penal Code of 153 *bis* allowed the government to isolate the persons who were considered to pose a danger to public order without a trial and any charges. “The Dutch instructions explicitly stated that the Boven Digoel internees, locked in, for sure, had the same duties and the same privileges (in the camp) as everybody else in the colony.”³⁴⁹ At the same time, according to the same Penal Code, they could be put away for an indefinite period of time. “As in the case of the Jews, there was no time set for their release.”³⁵⁰ Thus Digoel symbolized indefinite isolation for the “exiles,” and that terrified Indonesians.

There is no doubt that Digoel was a symbol of political suppression in the Indies in the late 1920s and the 1930s. The colonial government was partially responsible for engineering this powerful but complicated representation. To turn it into a symbol, the government allowed Malay language newspapers as well as the Dutch language ones to carry reports on Digoel from many aspects that on the one hand created an impression of normalcy in the internment camp. The normalcy was fabricated, of course, and maintained through tight supervision by the police.³⁵¹ On the other hand, by virtue of its very existence, Digoel projected a terrifying image and message to the Indonesian people. From reading the newspapers, Indonesians were

³⁴⁸ Pluvier, *Overzicht van de Ontwikkeling der Nationalistische Beweging in Indonesië in de jaren 1930 tot 1942*, pp. 42-43.

³⁴⁹ Mrázek, “Boven Digoel and Terezín,” p. 301.

³⁵⁰ Mrázek, “Boven Digoel and Terezín,” p. 301.

³⁵¹ See Shiraishi, “Policing the Phantom Underground.”

made aware of what it meant to be exiled to Digoel, and the Dutch regime relied heavily on journalistic reporting to place its Digoel project in the public consciousness and thus to deter further political activism.³⁵² This is what we see being reflected in Soekarno's letter, in his intense fear of being banished to Digoel.

To understand the process of the general public's conception of Digoel, newspaper coverage of the camp deserves our attention here. The colonial regime promoted Digoel in order to intimidate Indonesians, and it did so by relying on newspaper reports. The content of articles on Digoel was, of course, carefully controlled. Coverage on Digoel were of two kinds: the first type carried reporting on the life there, while the second one provided personal accounts on what was going on there. Essential for understanding the impact of these reports is an examination of the authors as well as how and from whose perspective Digoel was presented. All of these facts were shaped by the process of censorship, which prompts us to ask: What kind of censorship was at work with regard to Digoel? How did this particular censorship shape Indonesia's popular politics?

Censoring Digoel

Media reports played a vital role in spreading the image of Digoel among Indonesian intellectuals. The latest internment to and release from Digoel were frequent topics of news reporting. Private letters to internees' families and relatives, and personal interviews were also available in the newspapers.

There were two kinds of newspapers that carried reports on Digoel. The first was Dutch language newspapers. While colonial officials had the right to access colonial (secret) documents for their information on Digoel and on other internment camps, Indonesian intellectuals and leaders of the nationalist movement such as

³⁵² Shiraishi, "The Phantom World of Digoel," p. 94.

Soekarno relied on Dutch language newspaper reports to stay informed about decisions being made by the Dutch authorities. Some Dutch language newspapers in the Indies served as semi-official mouthpieces of the colonial government.³⁵³ These newspapers regularly covered Digoel, and they even had their own special correspondents for Digoel who traveled there to observe and to report. Such Dutch-centered discourse shaped the intellectual sphere in Indonesia. It represented a limited and regulated intellectual sphere. It was limited because only a small number of indigenous elite could attend the Dutch-Indigenous Schools (*Hollandsche Inlandsche Scholen*, HIS) and read Dutch newspapers; it was regulated because Dutch was the official language of communication for the Indies administration.

The second type of newspaper coverage that carried reports about Boven Digoel was the Malay language press, and to a lesser extent popular Malay-language novels. The Malay newspapers that regularly covered Digoel distinguished themselves in three ways: Those which sought to perceive Digoel mainly as a place for criminal elements rather than political prisoners; those that covered only facts; and those that carried personal accounts of persons who had experienced living or being interned in Digoel. Since most Malay language newspapers were not allowed to send their journalists to Digoel, many had to rely on Dutch language newspapers as the source of information on the camp and its development. They ended up citing and translating articles from Dutch newspapers into Malay.

Popular novels also played an important role in transmitting the image of Digoel. Three or four years after its establishment, Digoel seemed to become a fashionable topic for popular novels. In 1931 the Chinese-Malay literary monthly *Boelan Poernama* (Full Moon) published two different books on Digoel. This

³⁵³ Other Dutch newspapers spoke for the big planters and conservative parties that were often critical of government policies.

Bandung-based journal had a circulation of 10,000 copies and was quite popular because its contributors included contemporary well-known writers such as Tan Hong Boen (pseud.: Im Yang Tjoe and other names), Njoo Cheong Seng (pseud.: Monsieur d'Amour), and Lie Tjoei Khia (pseud.: Tjoekat Liang).³⁵⁴ The number of subscribers reading *Boelan Poernama* suggests that its two books on Digoel were likely circulated quite widely. The author of the first book, titled *Antara Idoep dan Mati, atawa Boeron dari Boven-Digoel* (Between Life and Death, or Fugitive from Boven-Digoel), was an ex-Digoelist by the name of Wiranta.³⁵⁵ The second book, *Darah dan Air-Mata di Boven Digoel* (Blood and Tears in Boven Digoel), was written by Oen Bo Tik.³⁵⁶ Wiranta went on to publish another Digoel novel entitled *Minggat dari Digoel* (Escape from Digoel) published by Awas in Soerakarta.³⁵⁷ Another popular literary journal, *Tjerita Roman* based in Malang, also published novels on Digoel: Liem Khing Ho's *Merah* (Red), which references the communist uprisings in 1926 and 1927 (*Tjerita Roman*, No. 99, March 1937), and Pouw Kioe An's *Api jang Tida Bisa Dibikin Padem* (Flames That Cannot Be Extinguished) (*Tjerita Roman*, No. 126, 1939). Kwee Tek Hoay published two novels related to Digoel: *Drama di Boven Digoel* (Drama in Boven Digoel), which was first serialized in the journal *Panorama* from December 15, 1929 to January 1, 1932, and then republished by Moestika in Bandoeng from 1938 to 1941;³⁵⁸ and *Penghidoepan Satoe Sri Panggoeng* (Life of A Theater Actress, 1931), a novel about the communist uprisings in 1926 and 1927. The Medan-based literary circle also published several Digoel novels written by former internees. They include Abd'oelxarim M. S.'s *Pandoe Anak Boeangan* (Pandoe an Exiled Person) (Medan:

³⁵⁴ Salmon, *Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia*, p. 408.

³⁵⁵ Wiranta, *Antara Idoep dan Mati atawa Boeron dari Boven-Digoel* (Bandoeng: Boelan Poernama, No. 30, 1931).

³⁵⁶ Oen, *Darah dan Aer-Mata di Boven Digoel*.

³⁵⁷ The novel is included in Pramoedya Ananta Toer (ed.), *Cerita Digul* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2001), which also has works by Wiranta, Abdoe'laxarim Ms., Turie, and D. E. Manu.

³⁵⁸ Kwee Tek Hoay, *Drama di Boven Digoel* (Bandung: Moestika, 1938).

Aneka, 1933), D’Nian S. B.’s *Ke Boven Digoel Dengan Kekasih* (To Boven Digoel With My Love) (1939), D. E. Manu Turie’s *Roestam Digoelist* (Roestam the Digoelist) (Medan: Tjerdas, 1940), and A. Oesman’s *Mata Kerandjang* (Wandering Eyes) (Medan: *Doenia Pengalaman*, 1940).³⁵⁹ The titles alone suggest the personal nature of the accounts given, which described the hardship and trials experienced by Digoel prisoners and which perhaps attracted readers’ interest the most.³⁶⁰ Since Digoel was an emerging and sensitive colonial project, during the first years of its existence, the colonial regime needed to carefully establish the image it hoped to promote. The press coverage of Digoel was a key medium for this project and even while newspapers were allowed to carry articles on Digoel, they were published under careful censorship. Internees were allowed to send out letters, but they had to be written in Malay (rather than in Javanese or other regional languages), so they could be read by the censoring officers before being forwarded.³⁶¹ The few Indonesian correspondents from Malay language newspapers who successfully gained permit to be stationed in Digoel had great difficulties reporting, because “the censorship there was too tight” (“*censuur disana terlampau ... keras!*”).³⁶²

Censorship figures prominently in the story of Boven Digoel in that it promoted and controlled the discourse related to the infamous camp.³⁶³ Censorship regulates who and what is included in or excluded from a particular discourse. It gives legitimacy to a certain discourse by allowing it to circulate in the society. This aspect

³⁵⁹ Wiranta, Abd’oelxarim Ms., Turie, D.E. Manu, *Digul* (Jakarta, 1997) has Abd’oelxarim M.S.’s *Pandoe Anak Boenangan* and D.E. Manu Turie’s *Roestam Digoelist*.

³⁶⁰ Although I doubt the claim, John B. Kwee labels such novels as Digoel literature as if such a genre was established in the 1930s. Kwee, “Chinese Malay Literature of the Peranakan Chinese in Indonesia 1880-1942.” Kwee however completely neglects the “Digoel literature” that was published from Medan in the 1930s.

³⁶¹ “tjoema moesti pake bahasa Melajoe dan diserahkan pada jang wadjib boeat dicensuur,” in “Soerat dari Digoel,” *Sin Jit Po*, August 23, 1927.

³⁶² “Boven Digoel: Orang-orang jang ‘djahat’ memboeat ‘onar’: Orang-orang jang ‘baik’ menjanjikan ‘Wilhelmus’,” *Pewarta Deli*, October 12, 1928.

³⁶³ Censorship has both positive and negative effects on the society. See Burt, “Introduction: The ‘New’ Censorship,” pp. xi-xxix.

of censorship works in a situation where power exerts itself by virtue of the sanctions it places over matters of the print and publishing industry. In the case of Digoel coverage, not only journalists but also internees contributed their articles to newspapers. Internees were able to contribute articles only if they passed a pre-publication censorship review in Digoel.³⁶⁴ Pre-publication censorship was applied to all writings from Digoel, including personal correspondence. It differed from the post-publication censorship of journalistic publications, which was then the standard procedure in the Indies. Because of its nature as a government political tool, it was important for the Indies regime to make Indonesians familiar with the Digoel project. It was also a part of Dutch defensive act to prevent criticism from Europe

In sum, Digoel literature was allowed to be written and published by Indies Chinese and other writers to promote awareness of Boven Digoel's existence and what life in the camp was like. The authorities regarded stories from Digoel as political lessons for the readers, as they framed a new perception on the indigenous nationalist movement, in this case the communist radicals. In general the political prisoners in Digoel were categorized into three: active collaborators, passive collaborators, and non-collaborators. Due to the shortage of labor, they were ironically forced to help build and manage their own "prison." By participating in the management and control of Digoel, the prisoners were to learn the Dutch colonial law and order, and the necessity of self-policing. It was like a miniature colonial "ward." In addition to Digoel literature, major Malay-language newspapers, both indigenous and Chinese, covered "news" on Boven Digoel until the beginning of the 1930s, and therefore Boven Digoel or Tanah Merah became a familiar place for the Malay readership. The rationale was that since Boven Digoel represented the proper colonial order and

³⁶⁴ "Mereka boleh toelis menoelis dalam soerat-soerat kabar, tapi toelisan itoe moesti diperiksa doeloe oleh pembesar (cencuur)," in "Perkabaran: Digoel-rahsia," *Pewarta Deli*, May 6, 1929.

society, the more it was reported and described, the more the general population would learn what an ideal colonial society was like.

Post-publication censorship was introduced under the Ethical Policy. As noted in earlier chapters, journalists and nationalists who wrote extreme and provocative articles were penalized with jail time when they violated *persdelict* (press offense articles of the Penal Code).³⁶⁵ Essentially no newspapers were banned or shut down before 1931, after which the new administrative measure against newspapers, called *persbreidelordonnantie*, was introduced.³⁶⁶ It is to be noted that most reports on Digoel appeared during the transitional years from the Ethical Policy to a more suppressive policy. For the most part the atmosphere was still rather lenient in the publishing world.

Reporting about Digoel also provided the occasion for newspapers to cite each other's articles. For instance, *Pewarta Deli* carried an article entitled "*Boven Digoel: Orang-orang jang 'djahat' memboeat 'onar'*" (Boven Digoel: "Unruly" people who are causing "trouble") in its October 12, 1928 edition.³⁶⁷ The article opens with a telegram from Den Haag, which referred to articles written by a well-known Dutch journalist, Dr. Marcus van Blankenstein. He was an editor of *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*, which was then a very influential newspaper based in Rotterdam, and had several opportunities to visit the Indies including Digoel. For many political activists in Indonesia and the Netherlands, his articles were considered to be a "guidebook" ("*penoendjoek djalan*") for information on Digoel. Meanwhile, the same *Pewarta Deli*'s article cited a report on Digoel by Dr. Broesma, another Dutch journalist, which had been published in *De Locomotief*, a Semarang-based Dutch newspaper, and had also been cited by the government news agency, Aneta.

³⁶⁵ See Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

³⁶⁶ See Chapters 7 and 9 of this dissertation.

³⁶⁷ "Boven Digoel: Orang-orang jang 'djahat' memboeat 'onar'," *Pewarta Deli*, October 12, 1928.

Since Malay language newspapers had difficulties sending their own correspondents to Digoel, they needed to rely on Dutch or other European journalists' accounts. Dutch and European correspondents in general could get permissions to visit and stay in Digoel much more easily than indigenous or Chinese ones. Some European journalists even went to Digoel several times. Yet, they generally toed the government line and disseminated official accounts on Digoel, and therefore their reports were considered safe.³⁶⁸ A culture of citation, in which various newspapers appeared to be reporting on a particular topic but were in fact only citing each other, was thus encouraged. This was another byproduct of censorship.

Under the Ethical Policy, the vernacular press served as a symbol and means to educate the indigenous people; in a different way, the reportage on Digoel was supposed to serve the same purpose – a symbol of the “free” press and a means to socialize a government project. One is tempted to ask: How did the authorities achieve these objectives? What exactly was being communicated in those Digoel articles?

Reporting on Digoel

As an internment camp, Digoel was a new construction that had to be carved out of the tropical landscape. The first several years of Digoel were mostly devoted to opening up the land and establishing an internment community. It was the internees themselves who provided labor for the project. For the many among the internees who were intellectuals and not used to doing hard manual work and land cultivation, this was especially difficult. The area was malaria-infested, hot and humid, barren, and very sparsely populated. The internees' neighbors were the Papuan tribes, whose

³⁶⁸ These Dutch and European journalists played a significant role to promote the image of Digoel as a healthy and ordered political camp among the European audience. Being a small nation in Europe, the positive reporting on Digoel was a way to prevent the criticism from neighbor European nations.

rudimentary existence had earned them a stereotyped reputation as “head-hunters” and “cannibals” in the eye of Indonesian readers.³⁶⁹ Three years after Digoel was established, in May 1930, the internee population reached its highest point when 1,308 persons were recorded being interned there.

During its construction, the Digoel project drew the attention of the general public. It became a kind of theater – the newspaper version of reality show – in that it included accounts of internees’ departures from their original community, their arduous yet mundane life in Digoel, and their (often unexpected) return home. The whole process was publicized and made open to the public. The following accounts are exemplary.

Departure:³⁷⁰

In the May 14, 1927, edition of *Sin Jit Po*, a Soerabaja-based Chinese-Malay newspaper, in the “City” section, readers found the following scene of the departure of internees who were scheduled to leave for Digoel from Soerabaja.

In the late afternoon a day earlier, even though it was raining, the Tandjoeng Perak seaport was unusually crowded (“*terlaloe rame jang loear biasa*”). The *Rumphius* was scheduled to depart for Makassar at five o’clock. At around four o’clock the internees arrived at the port in three buses, escorted by government officials. When the prisoners came out, they and some of the spectators (“*penonton*”) saluted each other. People recognized the internees because many of them were well-known branch activists of Soerabaja PKI and had been branded troublemakers (“*kaoem peroesoeh*”) by the authorities. Among the spectators were family members, friends, relatives, and sympathizers of the communist movement. From out of the

³⁶⁹ “Balik di Boven Digoel,” *Pewarta Deli*, April 19, 1928.

³⁷⁰ “Ka Digoel,” *Sin Jit Po*, May 14, 1927.

throng, all of a sudden a man sprinted through hollering “Long live communists!” (“*hidoeplah communist*”). The police seized him at once, and shortly after, the prisoners boarded the ship. There were 41 indigenous persons, 6 ethnic Chinese, as well as 11 women and children who accompanied the internees. On the *Rumphius* the prisoners were closely watched by 10 soldiers who were under the command of a Dutch sergeant. After all internees were on board, the crowd dispersed, as if after a show that had just ended. Excitement and anxiety mingled and lingered in their minds; they had no clue if and when they would ever see their family, friends, or comrades again.

The internees:

The names of internees were occasionally reported in newspapers following decisions released by the courts. In the June 13, 1927, edition of *Sin Jit Po*, we find typical article reporting on new Digoel internees that lists nine persons who were sentenced to internment in Digoel and includes a short summary of their career as activists.³⁷¹

I. Makki alias I. Mangki, 38 years old, a small scale merchant, the chairperson of the Market Union (*Passarbond*) from the People’s Association (SR) and PKI-related Workers Union of Ships and Sea; he was last located in Makassar. Noeroet gelar Soetan Radja Endah, 37 years old, a former surveyor of Topography service, member of SR, secretary of the Market Union and Peasant Union (Sarekat Kaoem Tani), last located in Makassar. Pio, 22 years old, a former writing staff at Volkslectuur (Balai Poestaka), a designer of Workers Union of Automobile and Electronics (*Sarekat Boeroe*

³⁷¹ “Orang-orang jang dikirim ka Boven Digoel,” *Sin Jit Po*, June 13, 1927.

Bengkel dan Electrisch), a commissioner of SR and PKI, last located in Makassar.

Pallaloi, 36 years of age, former street guard of dock-works in Makassar, a member and propagandist of SR, last located in Maros (South Celebes).

Abdoel Hamid Daeng Marowa, 28 years old, a former writing staff and municipal secretary in Makassar, a member and propagandist of PKI, last located in Makassar.

Moerad, 21 years old, a former intern clerk at the government inspector's office in Maros, a commissioner of SR, treasurer of the Peasant Union, a chairperson of Drivers Union (*Koetsierbond*), a propagandist of PKI, and last stationed in Makassar.

Oedin, 23 years old, a former designer and surveyor of forestry (*Boschwezen*), first secretary of the Peasant Union, the chairperson of International Debating Club, propagandist of PKI, last located in Makassar.

Ishak, 28 years of age, a former student journalist and agent of the Singer Corporation, a member of SR, secretary of the Peasant Union, Drivers Union, and Market Vendors, and propagandist of PKI, last stationed in Makassar.³⁷²

Mohamad Sjahmin gelar Pandji Nagara, 26 years old, a former journalist of the Department of Interior Affairs and of resident office in Telok Betong, but later lost his jobs, and chairperson and propagandist of PKI in Menggala, last located in Batavia.

³⁷² Ishak's experience in Digoel would later be recounted in a novel by his close friend, the well-known Chinese author Njoo Cheong Seng. See Monsieur d'Amour, *Taufan Gila: Bung Daeng Mentjari Kiamat: Oleh-oleh dari perantauan* (Crazy Storm: Brother Daeng Seeks Doomsday: Little Gifts from Abroad) (Djakarta: *Tjilik Roman*, 2-23, April 20, 1950).

All internees in this listing were between 21 to 38 years old and activists of PKI-related associations or labor unions, including some former government employees. The list makes evident that it was mainly PKI activists who were being banished to Digoel. Ironically however, most of the listed internees in the list were active in Makassar, where there were no (communist) revolts in 1926 and 1927 as had been the case in West Java and West Sumatra. Yet the authorities seized all well-known PKI activists based on their career and history of activism.³⁷³ This suggests how threatening the organization was for the Indies government, thus its members were treated accordingly by the authorities. Since non-communists internees were rarely reported in newspapers, ultimately it was likely that readers would assume that those who were banished to Digoel must have been communist activists and the idea of Tanah Merah as the place of “the reds” (*kaoem merah*) became entrenched

Arrival:

An account of internee’s arrival was reported in *Pewartu Deli* on April 19, 1928. It was provided through interviews with wives of internees who had just returned from Digoel. The article identified them as the wives of Soerodjojo and Mohamad Ashari, who returned to Semarang following the death of their husbands from high fever and elephantiasis in Digoel. The interview itself was conducted in Semarang on March 26, 1928.

According to these two sources, it took two days by ship from Surabaya to Makassar, three days from Makassar to Ambon, and then another 6 days from Ambon to Digoel. Newly arrived internees were usually assigned lodging at a temporary housing called internees’ camp (*interneering kamp*). During this temporary

³⁷³ Makassar appears to be the center of PKI activity in Sulawesi in the 1920s. See the previous footnote on M. d’Amour, *Taufan Gila*.

accommodation, they were supposed to make friends and help each other build their own cottages. The government gave remuneration to the internees, a fixed sum of f 6.30 for every two weeks, or f 0.30 per day. The remuneration however was not paid in the form of cash, but in the form of rice and other basic necessities. This is how their new life in Digoel started.³⁷⁴

Daily life:

Once the internees got used to the life in Digoel, their daily routines went relatively smoothly. According to a letter by one of the first groups of internee, which was published in *Bendera Islam* and cited by *Sin Jit Po* on August 1, 1927,³⁷⁵ there were six living quarters (“*kampoeng*”) in the camp; they were labeled kampoeng A, B, C, D, E, and F. Kampoeng A was the center of all kampoengs.

Their food rations generally consisted of rice, meat jerky, green peas, dried salted fish, brown sugar, shallots, salt, and the like. They received these daily necessities from a government cooperative and other shops as part of their remuneration.³⁷⁶ By the middle of 1928 there were four shops opened and run by those who were not interned. In addition to the government-run cooperative, there were two shops run by Chinese from Malang (East Java) and one by an Indonesian from Makassar. The shops usually acquired their materials from Ambon. The residents spent f 0.32 for daily food, while their daily stipend was f 0.72, which was increased over the time of their internment. They cultivated corn, long beans, radishes, Chinese cabbage, and other vegetables, but in general it was difficult to grow vegetables due to the poor soil. The living quarters began to take form in the

³⁷⁴ “Balik di Boven Digoel,” *Pewarta Deli*, April 19, 1928.

³⁷⁵ “Kabar dari Boven-Digoel,” *Sin Jit Po*, August 1, 1927.

³⁷⁶ One Chinese gained the government shop and turned it into his own shop. “Kedatengannja orang-orang jang diboeang di Tanah Merah (Boven Digoel),” *Sin Jit Po*, April 13, 1927.

meantime with each quarter consisting of less than one hundred residents. The residents were allowed to elect their representative or “village head.”

Health:

In terms of residents’ health, Digoel had a big problem. An interview with an editor of *Algemeen Indisch Dagblad*, published in *Sin Jit Po* on August 17, 1927, addressed the issue of health.³⁷⁷ Many in Digoel suffered malaria because a part of the internment camp was located in a swampy area and in general the place was invested with mosquito. By August 1927 a hospital had been built for the residents who took quinine on daily basis to ward off malaria. If a resident had a wife, the government provided two mosquito nets. Those who were with children could get necessary medicines from the polyclinic. Gradually though, Digoel brought a semblance of ordinary life to the residents. According to the editor above, some were said to have good hopes (“*orang-orang jang tinggal di Boven Digoel ada harepan baek*”) and professed to enjoy living there (“*orang merasa seneng tinggal di Boven Digoel*”).

Education:

The April 17, 1928 editorial of *Pewarta Deli* described the importance of education in Digoel Town (*Kota Digoel*). Since many of the internees were themselves intellectuals, education was high on their priority list. Digoel had two types of schools; Dutch Indigenous School (*Hollandsch Inlandsche School*) and Indigenous School (*Inlandsche School*). The Dutch Indigenous School was established by the government, while the other was supported by the internees.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁷ “Keada’an di Boven Digoel,” *Sin Jit Po*, August 17, 1927. *Algemeen Indisch Dagblad*, on the other hand, was a Bandoeng-based Dutch newspaper. Health was one of the most important issues among the Dutch to carry on the Digoel project, and hence it was frequently reported in the Malay language newspapers as well as Dutch ones.

³⁷⁸ “Kota Digoel,” *Pewarta Deli*, April 17, 1928.

In another edition, dated on September 5, 1928, *Pewarta Deli*'s "special correspondent" ("Speciaal Corr.") identified the names of teachers who taught at schools in Digoel. Teachers at the Dutch school were Hermawan of Mandailing (Tapanoeli, Sumatra), Mhd. Said from Surabaya (East Java) and Mrs. Niti Soemanteri of Soekaboemi (West Java). The Dutch school commission consisted of Soeprodjo from Bandoeng (West Java) and Said Ali from Padang (West Sumatra), who were no longer counted as internees. In 1928 two other kinds of schools were established. One was the English School (*Sekolah Inggeris*), designed not only for children but also for grown-ups, taught by J. Berani from Tapanoeli (Sumatra). The other was the Islamic School (*Sekolah Agama Islam*), built by the Digoel Islam Association (*Vereeniging Islam Digoel*). It taught Islam and Arabic, and the instructors were Dt. Batoeah, Mardjoeki, and Raoef from Padang (West Sumatra), Hadji Achmad Chatib from Banten (West Java), and Haroenalrasjid and Dasoeki from Soerakarta (Central Java).³⁷⁹ The teachers were generally Digoel internees (*Digoelisten*) who were former PKI activists. In terms of teachers and finance, the English and Islamic schools were both self-supporting

Rumors:

In the early years after Digoel was established, many kinds of rumors regarding the internees spread among the Indonesian public. These rumors constructed an image of communists, whose experiences many readers followed closely. Since those who were sent to Digoel were known to be radicals, people (especially their fellow communist sympathizers) generally expected them to continue their political idealism and resist the authorities in Digoel. A look at the contradiction between some of these rumors and actual reality is instructive. For example, in their

³⁷⁹ "Tanah Merah, Boven Digoel," *Pewarta Deli*, September 5, 1928.

interview with the correspondent of *Pewarta Deli*, Mrs. Soerodjojo and Mrs. Ashari, the two Digoel returnees whose spouses had died at Boven Digoel, refuted two specific widely circulating rumors with eyewitness accounts that painted a very different picture of the camps residents.

One rumor had it that several Digoelists had disappeared from the camp, and many were inclined to believe that they had tried to escape from Digoel. This story of triumph over Dutch colonial authority was contradicted, however, by the accounts given by Mrs. Soerodjojo and Mrs. Ashari, who relayed that the internees in question had simply lost their way in the forest while gathering firewood. When one internee from Sumatra actually did try to escape, he hid himself in the forest for more than twenty-four hours, but lost his way trying to get out of it. He managed to return to the camp only after he was rescued by indigenous tribesmen who showed him the way.

Another rumor alleged that a communist had publicly spat on the Governor of Ambon when the latter visited Digoel for inspection. Again the rumor was refuted by the returning wives, who noted that what really happened was that a sick internee on his way to the hospital at the same time the Governor was visiting accidentally vomited on the street. The Governor himself was nowhere near the scene when this event occurred, so no contact between the Governor and the internee ever took place. The fact that this non-incident became a subject of conversation and was brought up in the newspaper suggests that what happened in Digoel, in the eye of the public, carried some significance.³⁸⁰ It appears that some ardent followers of the nationalist activists were quietly still hoping that the latter's defiance was continuing in Digoel.

Returnees:

³⁸⁰ "Balik dari Boven Digoel," *Pewarta Deli*, April 19, 1928.

Usually the news coverage about those who were released from Digoel and sent back to their hometowns was short, simple and far less significant than news coverage on those first being interred. It carried only their names and their places of origin. It did not provide any detail about the circumstances of their release stating only that the given list of people would be returning home because the authorities no longer considered them dangerous and were confident that they would abide by the law.³⁸¹

Early release was usually granted to people who were found to be not involved in politics at all. There were cases of administrative “error,” which were usually exposed during discussions by Volksraad every year on problems related to Digoel. In the late 1929 and early 1930, for instance, the Council deliberated on how to repatriate innocent internees back to their hometowns. It had turned out that a number of Digoelists had no connection to PKI or other forms of political activism. These individuals had ended up at the internment camp because their investigation had been distorted by local indigenous administrators (*BB*) bent on seizing the opportunity it offered to settle personal scores.

Further investigations revealed that some of the innocent people were exiled to Digoel because they had refused to show the deference toward local indigenous bureaucrats required by feudal Javanese custom, so the officials had marked them as communist. The government ordered those administrators who were shown to have abused their power to write new reports on those internees for whom there was reason to believe in their innocence. After being monitored for one year in Digoel, thirty internees were allowed to return home (“*boleh dikembalikan kenegerinja*”) as free men who had been mistakenly imprisoned.³⁸²

³⁸¹ “Poelang dari Boven Digoel,” *Sin Tit Po*, April 4, 1930.

³⁸² “Ada apa di Digoel?” *Pewarta Deli*, March 13, 1930.

Apolitical Digoel

By April 1928, an article in *Pewarta Deli* had described Digoel as the most “developed” place in Indonesia “(*paling ontwikkeld di Indonesia kita ini*)”. Since this appeared to be far more true in an educational and political, rather than economic and material sense, the term “most enlightened” would probably be a better term for describing the Digoel community. Most of the internees were well educated and intelligent (*orang pandai*) and possessed the ability to write and read with an independent mind (*kemerdekaan*).³⁸³ Reading was their most important pastime and essentially they could request any books they wanted to read. They also read Malay language newspapers as well as Dutch ones as long as they were not too extreme.³⁸⁴ *Soeara Oemoem*, the Soerabaja-based nationalist newspaper led by Dr. Soetomo, was one of the most popular newspapers.³⁸⁵

Digoel was also administratively “developed” from the perspective of colonial management. It showcased an ideal case of colonial self-governance, in which the Digoelists attempted to live an ordinary life under circumstances that were decidedly abnormal by virtue of, among other things, the lack of political activity as reported in newspaper articles or other documents regarding the internees’ life. The abnormal nature of these circumstances is particularly striking when one considers that many Digoelists were former activists who were deeply committed to politics and activities such as unions and the labor movement. This abnormal condition had become the new “normal” in Digoel.

The task of creating a sense of normalcy affected the way Digoel was governed. In practice, the authorities introduced two methods of governance. The

³⁸³ “Kota Digoel,” *Pewarta Deli*, April 17, 1928.

³⁸⁴ “Balik dari Boven Digoel,” *Pewarta Deli*, April 19, 1928.

³⁸⁵ “Pembitjaraan dengan seorang ex-Digoelist: Onderwys dan Hygiene, Kesenian dan Sport,” *Pewarta Deli*, March 3, 1938.

first was to organize the residents in categories in order to manage their attitudes and ways of thinking. An example of this approach may be found in reports by the Dutch journalist Broersma, published on October 12, 1928, which was subsequently cited by Aneta.³⁸⁶ Broersma discussed the necessity to separate “good seeds” from “bad” ones (*perloe diadaken soeatoe perpisahan antara bibit jang baik dan bibit jang djahat*). Bad internees were those who caused trouble. For the good ones, Broersma offered the example of those who joined in the singing of “Wilhelmus,” the unofficial Dutch national anthem,³⁸⁷ on August 31 and who repented for their past mistakes. Such categorization coincided with the government’s own habit of classifying the residents according to behavior. The government announced in the People’s Council in November 1928 that the Digoel internees were to be classified into three categories: the recalcitrants (*de onverzoenlijken*), those who complied half-heartedly (*de halfslachtingen*), and those with good intention (*de welwillenden*).³⁸⁸ Those in the last category would be rewarded with repatriation if they showed good behavior while in Digoel.

This categorization affected the education of the internees’ children. Children of *werkwillingen*, or those who were willing to be governed, could attend the standard school (in this case the Dutch Indigenous School), which was subsidized by the government. This school had two teachers who were hired by the government and 80 pupils. Its language of instruction was Dutch. By contrast, the colonial authorities provided no school for the children of *naturalisten*, or those who were not willing to

³⁸⁶ “Boven Digoel: Orang-orang jang ‘djahat’ memboeat ‘onar’: Orang-orang jang ‘baik’ menjanjikan ‘Wilhelmus’: Ataoe Digoel Commissie Perloe!,” *Pewarta Deli*, October 12, 1928.

³⁸⁷ The official Dutch national anthem then was “Wien Nedêrlands bloed” (Those in whom Dutch blood), which was the national anthem from 1815 to 1932. But “Het Wilhelmus” was the oldest national anthem, remained popular and was played at the investiture of Queen Wilhelmina in 1898. It became the national anthem in 1932 again.

³⁸⁸ Shiraishi, “The Phantom World of Digoel,” p. 98.

cooperate with the authorities. These residents established their own schools with permission from the authorities, and were put under government supervision.

The other method of governance was to devise solid administrative units. Keeping order and harmony at Digoel required the cooperation of the internees themselves. Self-sustaining governance was the ideal form of government. While there were still “revolutionaries” (*revolutionair*) as the Dutch authorities named who refused to cooperate with the authorities, more than a small number of former communists had a change of heart and became pseudo government officials.³⁸⁹ In kampoeng A, for instance, internees Gondhojoewono worked as the “village representative,” Ngadiran as an officer (*rechercheur*), and Soedibjo as a spy (*spion*). They worked closely with the Dutch controller of Digoel, Monsou, and were often invited to his house for social functions. They even wrote a petition to the Governor-General pleading that Controller Monsou not be transferred when his term ended.³⁹⁰ On September 29, 1928, the authorities introduced the neighborhood watch system called “the guardian of order and peace” (*Rust en orde bewaarder* or “R.O.B.”). The guards wore a yellow jacket uniform with necktie and “ROB” badge and had a job that consisted of three aspects. First, they were to make sure that the ban on gatherings, in which politics and governmental regulations were discussed, was being observed. The second was to spread propaganda in order to make people more willing to work with the government. The third was to inform the residents of the conditions for their repatriation, essentially meaning that they could go home if they followed the rules, in addition to petitioning for the Governor-General’s pardon.

Those who did not cooperate were deemed unrepentant and committed to communist ideas. The most radical ones were placed in a separate location in South

³⁸⁹ “Pergaoelan orang boengan di Boven-Digoel,” *Pewarta Deli*, July 21, 1930.

³⁹⁰ “Pergaoelan orang boengan di Boven-Digoel,” *Pewarta Deli*, July 24, 1930.

Digoel, where living conditions were much worse than in the “developed” North Digoel. These internees were often described as “bad people” (*orang djahat*) and ignorant (*bodoh*) like the indigenous Papoean tribes, thus implying that they deserved to be relocated there. What was embarrassing for the authorities was the fact that the number of “bad people” actually increased over time and almost reached a hundred based on the statistics that the government conducted. How to deal with this undesired, as well as unexpected, tendency became a sensitive issue for the authorities and those who worked for them.

“Bad people” and their cohorts were particularly troublesome for the internees who became government collaborators. When Gondhojoewono, the representative of kampoeng A, had the opportunity to meet with the Assistant Resident from Ambon, he brought up an issue regarding dependents of the internees. More specifically it concerned the practice of sending female residents back to their hometowns. He said that there were some female residents who came to Digoel with the status of wife of a communist and after a while took an interest in and learned about communism. So he was not in favor of the idea of sending them home (or allowing them to leave whenever they chose to do so), because there was a big possibility that they would spread communist ideas among the people back home.³⁹¹ As a reformed communist, Gondhojoewono showed that he was concerned with containing the influence of communism not only in Digoel, but beyond. The Assistant Resident, however, replied somewhat indifferently, saying that it was the government policy to allow female residents who had chosen to come with their husband or father to leave on their own accord, with only one condition that they would not be allowed to return to Digoel.

³⁹¹ Gondhojoewono’s expression deserves an attention because he used the phrase of “return to Indonesia” (*poelang ke Indonesia*). It implies that Digoel was considered out of Indonesia as if it was an independent colony. This way of understanding Digoel was different from the one that colonial authorities and European journalists had, which treated Digoel as a part and a model of colonial Indonesia.

The Assistant Resident's response suggests that at this point the Indies government was no longer very concerned about the spread of communism in Java (Indonesia). Communism, which had been a major threat to the colonial government, had now become an insignificant problem confined to Digoel.

Those who took the side of the government were called "rightists" (*orang "kanan"*) by their fellow Digoelists. In his interview with reporter "F. A.," published in *Pewarta Deli* on July 21, 1930, Hasanoesi, an internee (*seorang geinterneerde*) who was then hospitalized away from Digoel due to serious illness, provided a list of collaborators, some of whom used to be distinguished activists and leaders of PKI-related organizations, their names often mentioned in newspapers and political gatherings, and therefore widely recognizable. Fourteen collaborators appeared on Hasanoesi's list: 1. Gondhojoewono from Semarang (the representative of Kampoeng A), 2. Soeprodjo from Bandoeng, 3. Soekindar from Semarang, 4. H. S. S. Parpatieh from Padang, 5. Prapto from Semarang, 6. Ngadiran (the officer) from Malang, 7. Abdoel Karim from Langsa, 8. Soendag from Ternate, 9. Moeh. Sanoesi from Bandoeng, 10. Mardjohan from Semarang, 11. Mochtar Balok from Padang, 12. Niti Soemantri from Bandoeng, 13. Ngilman from Bantam, 14. Soediono (the spy) from Soerabaja. In addition to exposing these names, Hasanoesi advised communist activists to choose their leaders carefully, so they did not end up with false leaders who betrayed their comrades. These fourteen former communists, he contended, were now only seeking their own comfort; their change of heart had contributed to the success of the government project in Digoel.

In the interview Hasanoesi went on to describe three kinds of internees in Digoel, his own categories differing from those developed by the government, which I described earlier, and derived from his own observations as an internee. For Hasanoesi, the first type of internees included those who still believed in communism

and in the future independence of Indonesia. The second was those who try to make profit from the situation in Digoel, but by being self-sufficient and working independently from the government. These were the merchants in Digoel. Finally, the third of Hasanoesi's categories included those who collaborated with the government and as such were outright traitors to the people.³⁹²

In reality, once confined at Digoel, former political leaders often had difficulty exercising the political skills that they had acquired and developed back home. A good example can be drawn from the following verbal exchange between Mas Marco Kartodikromo³⁹³ on one side, and the collaborator Gondhojoewono and the Controller on the other, which took place at a government organized meeting (*vergedering*) in kampoeng A.³⁹⁴ This account was also provided by correspondent "F. A." based on his interview with Hasanoesi.

The said meeting was called to inform residents of kampoeng A of the government decision, that as of March 1929 the bi-weekly allowance would be reduced gradually, until by the end of 1929 when it would be abolished completely. Obviously this change in remuneration would significantly affect the internees' life. Gondhojoewono first took the stage and remarked that Digoel was now developed because the officials had done a good job. He also pointed out that the living standards of its residents had become adequate, which in effect justified the reduction of allowance from the government. He then advised the gathering that if they wished to earn more money, they could work for the government or at the local agencies. He

³⁹² "Pergaoelan orang boengan di Boven-Digoel," *Pewarta Deli*, July 25, 1930.

³⁹³ Marco had been interned to Digoel since 1927; he was one of the most prominent contemporary Indonesian nationalists. He contributed articles for Malay language newspapers about daily life and problems that internees confronted in Digoel. *Pewarta Deli*, a Medan based nationalistic newspaper, carried his serial story (feuilleton) from 1927/1928 and 1931. The form of serial story deserves an attention because it was considered to be entertainment reading. Seven decades later, a portion of the series was published in a book form, as, *Pergaulan Orang Buangan di Boven Digoel* (Social Life of Exiles in Boven Digoel) (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Popular Gramedia, 2002), covering the 51 series originally issued in 1931, but excluding those from earlier years. Marco died in 1932 from malaria.

³⁹⁴ "Pergaoelan orang boengan di Boven-Digoel," *Pewarta Deli*, July 24, 1930.

went on to say that those who objected to government policies should address their objections to the Controller in Digoel, and that it was unnecessary to write letters to the Governor-General, to the People's Council, to the Governor of Ambon, or to the Parliament (*Tweede Kamar*) in the Netherlands.

Towards the end of the meeting, when the question and answer time came,, Mas Marco stood up and raised questions. His questions were rather sensitive and drew attention from the gathering, as people knew him as a crafty political activist.

Marco: Gentlemen, I don't have to argue with what the village representative has said; as the Dutch proverb says: A person with a sharp mind only needs half the words. We read the newspapers and people know what's written about the situation here. I am saying this because I need to ask the Controller about something that concerns myself and the plan to suspend the allowance (*onderstand*) in the future.

If our allowance were going to be suspended, I am asking the Controller that when I send letters to my family in Java to ask for monetary assistance to support my living here to make up for the suspension of our allowance, my letter be dispatched by the censor office (*censuur*), because it has happened in the past (in December 1927) that when the allowance was going to be suspended too, a number of people who wrote about it in their letters later found that their letters were being returned by the censor (the *Wedono* [a native regional administrator]). I have also sent a letter to Java using the registered service (*aangetekend*) (in October 1928) but to this day I have never received a receipt. I have no way of knowing if the letter has really been sent or not, and who is at fault in this case: the censor or the post office?

Gondhojoewono: Regarding that matter, Mr. Marco, you can complain directly to the Controller, and there's no need to bring it up here, because it has nothing to do with the discussion on the allowance.

Marco: My question is actually related to the allowance. Moreover, as residents of this village are here, I have to raise the subject here, because it was not only my letter that was returned, but also others'.

Controller [interjecting]: Was that the letter to Ir. Soekarno?

Marco: Yes.

Controller: Was that the letter in the Javanese language and script at the time when the Wedono had already left?

Marco: No, the Wedono was still here.

Gondhojoewono became irritated: Your words, Mr. Marco, are trying to influence the people who are present here and manipulate them into blaming the government.

Marco: No, I am not trying to manipulate [anyone].

Gondhojoewono pounded the table to silence Marco, to stop his words.

Controller: Don't act up here!

Marco: I am not acting up.

Controller: Shut up!

Aspirant Controller interjected: Shut up!

At once Marco left the gathering.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁵

Marco: Toean toean, saya tidak perloe membantah apa jang dikatakan oleh wakil kampoeng; peri bahasa Belanda soedah berkata: een goed verstaander heft maar een half word noodig (Seorang jang tajam pikirannja soedah tjoekeop dengan separoh perkataan sadja). Kita orang telah membatja Koran Koran dan orang mengetahoei apa jang tertoeis tentang keadaan disini. Saja berkata ini perloe bertanja kepada Controleur dan meloeloe oentoek keperloean saja sendiri jang berhoeboneg dengan tjaboetan onderstand jang akan dating.

Kalau onderstand kita itoe mesti ditjaboet, saja minta kepada Controleur, bila saja kirim soerat ketanah Djawa kepada familie kami disana boeat minta bantoean oeang boeat hidoep karena onderstand telah ditjaboet, soepaja soerat kami dilangsoengkan oleh censuur, sebab doeloe (dalam boelan December 1927) ketika onderstand hendak ditjaboet katanja, kita

The issue of the suspension of allowance revealed the difficult living situation in Digoel, despite the government campaign to portray it as a developed and well-governed community. Marco had used the occasion presented by the discussion about the matter to bring up the issue of government censorship of letters that the internees had tried to send to their families or associates. It was known that all letters were subject to censoring, but Marco's veiled criticism of this regime had put the local officials on the defensive. The Controller however did not hesitate to acknowledge that he was aware of Marco's letter to Soekarno, leader of the Indonesian nationalist movement. The content of the letter was not disclosed, but it is safe to assume that it carried some political significance. In addition, the letter had been written in the Javanese language and script, which not only violated the rule that all letters had to be written in the Malay language, but naturally invited suspicion. The Controller could sense that Marco's questions might have political intent and therefore he quickly

orang tidak boleh kirim soerat jang menjeboetkan tjaboetan onderstand, sedang orang orang jang telah terlandjoer kirim soerat tentang hal itoe, soeratnja dikembalikan oleh censuur (Wedono). Dan djoega kami kirim soerat ketanah Djawa dengan aangeteekend (boelan October 1928) sampai sekarang tidak ada recunja. Kami tidak tahoe apakah itoe soerat dilangsoengkan atau tidak dan djoega tidak mengetahoei kesalahan siapakah hal ini: censuur atau post?

Gondho: Hal itoe toean Marco bias tanja sendirian kepada Controleur, tidak perloe ditanjakan disini, karena hal itoe tidakberhoeboengan dengan onderstand ini.

Marco: Pertanjaan kami ini memang berhoeboeng dengan onderstand jg. dibijtarakan. Lagi poela kami sebagai pendoeboek kampoeng ini, perloe hal terseboet kami tanjakan disini, karena tidak soerat saja sadja jang dikembalikan, tetapi lain orang poen begitoe djoega.

Controleur: Apakah itoe soerat kepada Ir. Soekarno?

Marco: Ja.

Controleur: Itoe soerat bahasa dan hoeroef Djawa itoe waktue Wedono soedah pergi?

Marco: Tidak, Wedono masih disini.

Gondho mendjadi marah: Perkataan toean Marco ternjata masoekkan pengaroeh kepada orang-orang jang berhadhir dan mengasoet soepaja orang menjalahkan bestuur disini.

Marco: Tidak: saja tidak mengaroet.

Gondho mengetok medja soepaja toean Marco diam, tidak meneroeskan perkataanja.

Controleur: Disini djangan koerang adjar!

Marco: Saja tidak koerang adjar.

Controleur: Diam!

Asp. Controleur toeroet tjampoer: Diam!

Marco teroes meninggalkan itoe verg.

The citation is taken from "Pergaloeran orang boengan di Boven-Digoel," *Pewarta Deli*, Juli 24, 1930.

became agitated. The village representative, the Controller, and the Aspirant Controller then silenced Marco so that the gathering would not be influenced.

The exchange between Marco and the authorities reveal the “truth” about Digoel and the kind of political environment that internees faced and to which they had to adjust. Essentially no actual dialogue between Marco and the Controller occurred. Rather the communication was one-way as the authorities refused to engage in Marco’s query, cut him off summarily, and enjoyed the last word. When his objection was dismissed, Marco offered no further argument and left the meeting. Readers no longer see the same intensity in Marco that they had seen in his electrifying political speeches and activism on Java. It is possible members of the Indies public reading about this exchange in *Pewarta Deli* would find themselves disappointed to see that a political firebrand like Marco had not only been banished from their midst, but effectively silenced. Furthermore, they would have seen that his resistance had been effectively discouraged by the threat of escalating punishment. While Marco had been allowed to first express his opinion as part of the discussion, he clearly stayed shy of crossing the limits set by authorities which, once trespassed, would have provided grounds for banishment to Tanah Tinggi, the final destination for the recalcitrant.

The interview in *Pewarta Deli*’s article does not mention how attendees of the gathering reacted to the exchanges between Marco and the officials. But the absence of such account suggests that there was no further demonstration of defiance worthy of mention. Their attitude was very different from the spirited crowd who gathered at the seaport in Soerabaja in May 1927 to see them off. The spectators at the port came at their own will to show their moral support for the “heroes.” They were still optimistic about political activism (*pergerakan*) and the future of Indonesia. The formal gathering in Digoel consisted of former communist activists, Marco’s comrades, yet

they did not speak up with him. They might still be supportive of his ideals, but their silence suggests that they had been transformed; they had become “good” citizens of Digoel. Their attitude was similar to another kind of spectators – the newspaper readers. The Digoel project had produced a passive audience who did not participate in actual gatherings and only imagined the political stage through print words. The last two types of audience represented the demobilized popular politics that would emerge in the 1930s.

It is important to note, however, that although Marco’s words were silenced by the authorities, the readers were able to follow his noncompliance through the newspapers. In this way a kind of communication between readers and activists was established. Mobilization politics were no longer feasible, but print media could transmit political ideas as well as be the site of activism. Under the “normalcy” being created by the government, a new form of politics was about to emerge in colonial Indonesia. In the 1930s, the politics of print words came to shape popular politics.³⁹⁶

Conclusion

This chapter examined the political aspect of the Digoel project, and, more specifically, the hidden messages the colonial regime was able to broadcast via news coverage of the camp, intended to depoliticize political activism. Informing the public about the lives of internees in Digoel did not necessarily “scare” Indonesians, although political activists may have perceived a different message. Many readers were rather eager to follow the accounts on Digoel. Colonial authorities had some specific motives in promoting the Digoel project through the news media. Readers of Malay language newspapers became familiar with the “normalcy” in Digoel because the ordinary daily lives of the internees, who after all were supposed to be banished from

³⁹⁶ See Chapter 8 of this dissertation.

the public's view, were frequently reported on and their intimate details disclosed. Readers were able to follow the expansion and development of Digoel, perhaps even more closely than they did the developments occurring in their own immediate communities. The internment camp had become a popular topic for consumers of the print media.

The development of Boven Digoel as a major colonial project was phenomenal. The number of internees increased rapidly in the first three years after it was established, reaching 1308 people in May 1930,³⁹⁷ but thereafter declined rather drastically. In January 1931 the number of residents was 1178; in January 1932 this number had decreased to 793 and then by January 1933 to 553. In January 1934 there were only 440 residents in the camp, less than one third the number that had been present at the camp's highest point.³⁹⁸ Back in 1928 Dr. Soetomo, a prominent nationalist leader who would establish the Association of Indonesian Nation (*Persatoean Bangsa Indonesia*, PBI) in 1930, had made a projection that the more people being sent to Digoel, the stronger the movement would be ("*Semakin banyak orang jang dikirim ke Digoel, pergerakan semakin tambah-tambah koeat*").³⁹⁹ In reality however, this turned out to be not the case, because after a while, the communist movement lost its steam. When this happened, newspapers also seemed to have lost their appetite for covering Digoel.⁴⁰⁰ The declining number of internees and news reports, however, was of no importance to the overall impact of the Digoel

³⁹⁷ "Rapport van het lid van de raad van Nederlandsch-Indië, W. P. Hillen, over de interneringskampen aan de Boven-Digoel, 22 juli 1930," in R. C. Kwantes (ed.), *De Ontwikkeling van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlandsch-Indië; derde stuk 1928-Aug. 1933* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1981), p. 463.

³⁹⁸ "Nota van de afdeling Kabinet van het departement van kolonien, 15 okt. 1937," in R. C. Kwantes (ed.), *De Ontwikkeling van de Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlandsch-Indië: Aug. 1933-1942* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1982), pp. 468-469.

³⁹⁹ "Meskipun "diperboeat" satoe Boven Digoel: Politik mesti ada ditengah-tengah pergaoelan ra'iat," *Pewarta Deli*, September 12, 1928.

⁴⁰⁰ *Sin Jit Po*, for instance, covered Digoel for twenty one times in 1927, while it carried only two articles in 1930.

project. It was in the first several years that mass publications on the internment camp mattered helped achieve the project's success. As newspapers reported intensively on Digoel between the years 1927 and 1930 they were pivotal in helping frame the image of and discourse on this artificial community.

The political aim of journalistic representations of the Digoel project was to educate the general public. While reports on Digoel served as a deterrent for potential firebrands out there, they also show-cased the camp as a good model of a well-governed and self-sustained community that the rest of the Dutch Indies colony could learn from. Finally, it was also designed as a place of no return for political offenders. The ideal colonial project operated on principles of tight surveillance as well as betrayal and mutual scrutiny.

No mobilization politics was allowed to emerge in Digoel as well as in Indonesia in the 1930s. The message was clearly understood by activists and general readers alike. Soekarno himself got the message, and therefore took the risk of writing a letter asking for clemency from the Prosecutor General, placing his reputation at stake. He understood that political activity had consequences; that as far as he obeyed the colonial law and order, and behaved like a "good" (*baik*) citizen he would not be considered dangerous. Soekarno tried to save himself from being sent to Digoel by promising that he would quit political life. The fear of permanent exile in Soekarno's mind altered his political will. The Digoel project successfully compromised his idealism and activism, and the "scary" image of Digoel was firmly entrenched.

CHAPTER 7

PERSBREIDEL AND NATIONALIST POLITICS

The new decade – the 1930s – began with anxiety for the Indies state; anxiety that political activism might grow in uncontrollable ways and that the wave of the Great Depression would have unpredictable effects on colonial management. In terms of censorship, the new decade opened with an administrative measure – *persbreidel* – against journalists and especially the publishing business. Again, its main justification was to maintain public law and order. This emphasis on public law and order more than ever posed particular challenges for print culture in the 1930s.

Scholarship remembers the 1930s Indies as the period when political activities by Indonesian nationalists were suppressed by the state and controlled by the secret police as well. By 1934 Soekarno, Mohammad Hatta, Sutan Sjahrir and many other prominent Indonesian nationalists had been exiled to remote islands, while their “non-cooperative” movement was crushed.⁴⁰¹ Freedom of expression and freedom of association were severely restricted, and the Indies state finally became “a police state” in the 1930s.⁴⁰² In the latter half of the 1930s the “whole country went into exile,” as Rudolf Mrázek puts it,⁴⁰³ and the people came to believe that the nationalist movement was a “*taboo*.”⁴⁰⁴ Thus at this point the Indies state faced diminishing challenges from political activists. The quelling of the nationalist movement

⁴⁰¹ Harry J. Benda, *Continuity and Change in Southeast Asia: Collected Journal Articles of Harry J. Benda* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies, 1972), pp. 237-238.

⁴⁰² Mrázek, *Sjahrir*, p. 155.

⁴⁰³ Mrázek, *Sjahrir*, p. 154.

⁴⁰⁴ Pluvier, *Overzichten van de Ontwikkeling der Nationalistische Beweging in Indonesië in de Jaren 1930 to 1942*, p. 42.

intensified the image of the repressive, strong, and efficient colonial state, which corresponded with the appearance of political tranquility in the colony.⁴⁰⁵

All of this became possible following a “political-administrative revolution”⁴⁰⁶ that had taken place in the Indies state since the nineteenth century. With the changes that this revolution brought about, the strength and autonomy of the state were guaranteed by a new infrastructural power that may be defined as the “institutional capacity of a central state [...] to penetrate its territories and logistically implement decisions.”⁴⁰⁷ From the perspective of infrastructural power⁴⁰⁸ the Indies state seemed to have achieved all three levels of power: It established an efficient and capable central state, secured its territory, and achieved a stable social order. Hence it became what scholars call a “*beambtenstaat*” (bureaucratic state), or a state with a thorough and efficient bureaucratic machine.⁴⁰⁹

The image of this repressive period of the Indies state has been associated with the lack of “free speech and expression” under the colonial power. Describing the late colonial state after Indonesia gained its sovereignty, Yale University professor of anthropology and sociology, Raymond Kennedy,⁴¹⁰ wrote in 1946, “The censorship laws of the Indies have been almost unbelievable in their repressiveness, and the

⁴⁰⁵ The Indies was not the only repressive and authoritarian state in the early twentieth century, but in fact most states were more or less repressive. For the cases of the US, see Robert Justin Goldstein, *Political Repression in Modern America: From 1870 to 1976* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

⁴⁰⁶ Robert Cribb, “Introduction: The Late Colonial State in Indonesia,” in Robert Cribb (ed.), *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and Economic Foundations of the Netherlands East Indies, 1880-1942* (Leiden: KITLV, 1994), p. 5.

⁴⁰⁷ Mann, “The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results,” p. 113.

⁴⁰⁸ Soifer, “State Infrastructural Power: Approaches to Conceptualization and Measurement.”

⁴⁰⁹ Harry J. Benda, “The Pattern of Reforms in the Closing Years of Dutch Rule in Indonesia,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (1966), pp. 589-605; Sutherland, *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite*; Benedict R.O’G. Anderson, “Old State, New Society: Indonesia’s New Order in Comparative Historical Perspective,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (1983), pp. 477-496.

⁴¹⁰ Kennedy started to establish Southeast Asian Studies at Yale University. Since 1930 Kennedy conducted research on the people and society in the Indies and he served for the Department of State during the war period while kept stationing in the Indies and Southeast Asia. For Kennedy’s career, see John F. Embree, “Raymond Kennedy, 1906-1950,” *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1951), pp. 170-172.

restrictions on free assembly and free speech have been almost as bad.”⁴¹¹ As an expert of the Indies/Indonesia, Kennedy noted the stringent and comprehensive censorship laws installed by the Indies government to target the indigenous press. He lists seven forms of expression that were prohibited by the Indies government:

1. expressions of sentiments of hatred or contempt for the Government of either the Netherlands or the Netherlands East Indies, or for any groups of the population of either;
2. propagation of revolution by inciting disturbance of the peace or assailing a public authority;
3. circulation of articles or pictures which violate the censorship laws for the purpose of publicity;
4. publication of false reports for the purpose of sowing dissension;
5. publication of secret military or governmental information;
6. insulting a member of the Royal Family, the Governor-General, the ruler of a friendly nation, or the representative of a friendly nation accredited to the Netherlands Government;
7. insulting any public institution or private person in the Netherlands or the Netherlands East Indies.⁴¹²

As Kennedy observes, in their aggressive application by the Indies colonial state, these rules profoundly affected the Indies print culture. He went on to remark that “violation of any of these rules brought warnings, and then, if repeated, suspension of the offending publication. After two suspensions, additional offenses might be

⁴¹¹ Kennedy, “Dutch Plan for the Indies,” p. 101.

⁴¹² Raymond Kennedy, “Indonesian Politics and Parties,” *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 14, No. 10 (May 23, 1945), p. 131.

penalized at the discretion of the court, even to the extent of prohibiting the publishing concern and all individuals involved in it from ever again conducting journalistic activities in the Indies.”⁴¹³ To a certain extent, Kennedy was right that the Indies state conducted repressive press policy in the 1930s. But he had confused *persbreidel* and *persdelict* (press offence articles of Penal Code), and overlooked the fact that *persbreidel* targeted not only the indigenous press but also the Dutch and especially (Indies) Chinese press. Kennedy’s misinterpretation and overemphasis on the suppressive aspect of Dutch colonial censorship has led to the general impression that Indies censorship was especially authoritarian. His focus on suppressive censorship obscured for his readers a clearer view and deeper understanding of how the Indies state actually applied *persbreidel*.

The conventional wisdom exemplified in Kennedy’s work treats *persbreidel* as another symbol of the suppression of free press. In turn, the most frequently cited work reflecting this view was J. M. Pluvier’s *Overzichten van de Ontwikkeling der Nationalistische Beweging in Indonesië* (“Overviews of the Development of Nationalistic Movement in Indonesia”) published in 1953. This review notes that up until 1936 twenty-seven Indonesian nationalistic newspapers were temporarily shut down on account of *persbreidel*.⁴¹⁴ Although Pluvier did not specify his source for this number, it was actually based on an account published in 1936 by a prominent Indonesian journalist, Saëroen.⁴¹⁵ A closer look at the data reveals that even Saëroen did not know the exact number of cases.

⁴¹³ Kennedy, “Indonesian Politics and Parties,” p. 131.

⁴¹⁴ Pluvier, *Overzichten van de Ontwikkeling der Nationalistische Beweging in Indonesië*, p. 165.

⁴¹⁵ Saëroen, *Dibelakang Lajar Journalistiek Indonesia* (Batavia-Centrum: Drukkerij Olt & Co., 1936), pp. 93-94.

Table 7-1: Numbers of <i>Persbreidel</i> , 1932-1940		
Year	1st phase ⁴¹⁶	2nd phase
1932	1	0
1933	6	2
1934	16	1
1935	3	0
1936	8	3
1937	3	3
1938	13	6
1939	7	6
1940	2	5
Total	59	26

[My own counting from the *Mailrapporten*.]

My own examination of secret colonial documents of the time suggests that there were thirty-seven cases of *persbreidel* up until the last case that Saëroen tallied in his book. If counting includes the latter half of the 1930s, the number of newspaper closures in the Indies exceeded eighty. This jump in number may be attributed to the fact that other newspapers – including Chinese and Dutch press publications – in addition to Indonesian nationalistic ones became the victims of *persbreidel*. This fact suggests that the policy priority concerning *persbreidel* had changed in the course of the 1930s.

In order to understand the political implications of this development, *persbreidel* needs to be examined in the context of wider political trends in the 1930s Indies. Unlike *persdelict*, which targeted individual journalists and involved a trial process at the district level, *persbreidel* relied on administrative coordination from the district level up to the Governor-General, and this administrative judgment dealt with newspaper agencies in place of court trials. Because *persbreidel* was an

⁴¹⁶ *Persbreidel* action was usually applied in two phases; the first phase could shut down the publisher up to eight days, while the second phase could suspend it up to one year.

administrative measure, it was subject to the policy priorities of the colonial state, which changed over the time depending on political and social circumstances. Hence *persbreidel* worked in the manner of preventive surveillance (*preventief toezicht*)⁴¹⁷ against newspapers and periodicals in the 1930s.

Persbreidel

In September 1931, the Press Curbing Ordinance, known as *persbreidel*, was introduced.⁴¹⁸ This ordinance, ushered in by Governor-General De Graeff on 7 September 1931, was put into effect by Governor-General Bonifacius Cornelis de Jonge, who succeeded De Graeff five days after its enactment. The core of this new press law rested on the power of the Governor-General to temporarily proscribe the publication of a newspaper or periodical on the grounds of maintaining public order. It was evidently meant to be an instrument of intimidation against the emerging nationalist press, allotting much arbitrary power in the hands of the Governor-General. Articles of the *persbreidel* ordinance read:

Article 1

(1) If in his opinion it is necessary for the sake of maintaining public security, after consultation with the Council of the Netherlands Indies, with one legal decision the Governor-General can forbid the issuance of a particular publication for a period of time.

(2) This decision then by (or by the order of) the Prosecutor General shall be notified to the publisher and printer, and also to person(s) under the editorship

⁴¹⁷ Mr. 604x/34.

⁴¹⁸ The official name of the ordinance was “Bescherming van de openbare order tegen ongewenste periodiek verschijnende drukwerken, Ordonnantie van 7 September 1931, Staatsblad 1931, no. 394” (Ordinance of the Governor-General dated 7 September 1931, To protect public order against the publishing of undesirable periodicals, State Decree 1931, no. 394).

of the suspended publication, as long as the name and place of residence of this person is known.

(3) If this act of maintaining public security by the Governor-General is no longer necessary, this decision by him, regarding all or part of this particular publication, can be rescinded.

(4) Unless revoked earlier, the decision is valid for one year.

Article 2

(1) If the above measure does not bring desired results, the Governor-General after consultation with the Council of the Netherlands Indies, can prohibit the printing, publishing, and distribution of the said publication, for a maximum of eight days for daily newspapers and for the duration of three issues in a row for magazines.

(2) The decision instructed by the Governor-General will be announced in the *Javasche Courant*. The decision is to take affect one day after the announcement is published in *Javasche Courant*.

(3) When the period of suspension expires and the publisher of the publication resumes, a new prohibition can be issued as written in Article 1. For daily newspaper, the second and subsequent suspension(s) shall be for a maximum of thirty days in a row.

Article 3

(1) The prohibition mentioned in Article 2 shall be notified to the Assistant Resident in Java and Madoera and to the head of the local administrator in other places where the publication is printed.

(2) The Assistant Resident or head of the local administration shall immediately take steps so that during the period of suspension the proscribed publication not be printed, published, or distributed, for which case he has the power to confiscate the printing machine and other equipment, and shut the shops used for printing with a seal. He has the authority, if necessary with the help of the police, to enter properties that are closed, including houses.

(3) As much as possible he shall inform those who are implicated, as referred to in point No. 2 of Article 1.

Article 4

(1) Whoever violates the proscription in Article 2 shall be penalized with prison sentence for a maximum of one year.

(2) The same punishment shall apply to whoever knows of the proscription but cooperates or helps compose or manage the proscribed publication.

(3) Such punishable cases by this article are regarded as crimes.

Article 5

This ordinance is to take affect on the day after it is announced in *Javasche Courant* (announced on September 11, 1932).⁴¹⁹

The major points of the ordinance may be summarized as follows:

Article 1 empowers the Governor-General to designate certain publications for temporary suspension. If, subsequently, the designated publication soft-pedaled its criticism, thereby reducing the threat to public order, the designation could be partly or totally revoked. Otherwise it would remain in force for one year.

⁴¹⁹ Translated from Saëroen, *Dibelakang Lajar Journalistiek Indonesia*, pp. 90-91. See also *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië* 1931/394.

Article 2 authorizes the Governor-General to prohibit the printing, publishing, and distribution of designated publications. In the case of a daily newspaper, the ban could remain in force for up to eight days, and for periodicals, for up to three times the period between consecutive issues. A previously banned publication could again be banned after resuming publication. For further offenses, a newspaper could be banned for up to thirty consecutive days on each occasion.

According to Article 3, the decision to ban a publication would be transmitted to the head of the local government in the region, where it was printed. Since 1932 this official, had to hold the rank of Assistant Resident, at least on the islands of Java and Madoera. The same article allows this official to take immediate measures to prevent the printing, publishing and distribution of the publication concerned by confiscating the printing presses and other materials used in the production process, and closing its premises. Where necessary, the police were authorized to gain entry into barred premises including private houses.

Article 4 specifies the penalties that would be meted out for violation of the ordinance. Deliberate offenses against Article 2 were punishable by a one-year maximum prison term. The same sentence would apply to a person who, aware of the ban on a publication, further collaborated in the editing or organization of its contents, or its printing. All these acts were categorized as crimes.

However, the exact way in which *persbreidel* would be issued remained obscure in the official text of the *persbreidel* ordinance. Many journalists and Indonesian politicians expressed their worries about *persbreidel*, wondering to what extent it would affect the press. Initial reactions after the introduction of *persbreidel* came, predictably, from the nationalist camp. In the January 16, 1932, edition of the nationalist-leaning *Pewarta Deli* of Medan, the special advisor for the Congress of Great Indonesia (*prae-adviseur Kongres Indonesia Raja*), R. Soekardjo

Wirjopranoto,⁴²⁰ contributed an article entitled “Press and *Persbreidel*.”⁴²¹ Soekardjo was a prominent Javanese politician and lawyer. He acknowledged that he could not really explain how *persbreidel* was exercised, even though he was a member of Volksraad, where the proposal of *persbreidel* was consulted and discussed. He provided an exposition of this new ordinance and tried to explain how it was different from the existing one, which was the *persdelict*. In this article, Soekardjo also points out that, unlike in the Netherlands, Indonesians cannot express their mind freely because they are not in a free country. Even though to write and to express one’s thoughts is part of one’s basic rights (*hak kodrat*), Indonesians live in a cage where unjust regulations are installed unjustly. Since the press is an important medium for the expression of the people’s will, spirit, and their (nationalist) movement, he urges everyone involved in the press to oppose the *Persbreidel* Ordinance, as the People’s Council had tried to do. He calls on them to pay no heed to the law and to continue to stand behind the people’s movement as they would otherwise do. In other words, Soekardjo was making a case that *persbreidel* posed a major threat to the press’ ability to speak out against the colonial authorities and to political activism in general.

From Soekardjo’s article, we also learn that the government had introduced *persbreidel* because it was not satisfied with the existing law, handled by courts, which generally allowed journalists to go free after paying a fine. He noted that the Indies government had already had a suppressive penal code, represented by the infamous articles of 161 *bis* and 153 *bis* and *ter* concerning public order and security. In his view, *persbreidel* added new repressive means to the existing penal code and was made even more dangerous by the fact that the Governor-General held the power

⁴²⁰ Born on July 5, 1903, in Kesoegihan, Tjilatjap, Central Java, Soekardjo graduated from law school in 1923, worked at government courts, and then opened his own law office “Wisnu” in Malang, East Java. He was elected at the People’s Council (Volksraad) in 1931, while established Persatoean Bangsa Indonesia (PBI) with Dr. Soetomo.

⁴²¹ R. Soekardjo Wirjopranoto, “Pers dan Persbreidelordonnantie,” *Pewarta Deli*, January 16, 1932.

to decide its application. In other words, the *persbreidel* ordinance allowed government officials to circumvent the court. For Soekardjo, this sidestepping of the court made possible by *persbreidel* was the crux of the problem – since *persbreidel* operated “outside of the book of laws,” it was especially authoritarian. It is imperative, he contends, that the government allows judges to decide if a newspaper is truthful or not, as is the case in the system of *persdelict* where accusations are allowed to be debated in court. By contrast, he emphasizes, *persbreidel* provides extrajudicial power for the authorities to suppress the press. The decision to invoke this ordinance, he argues, would be largely subjective and shaped by whether or not the authorities feel secure (*aman*) and peace (*tenteram*). It is this point – how exactly *persbreidel* would be applied – that Soekardjo emphasizes he cannot explain, because it can be invoked in an arbitrary (*willekeur*) way. Soekardjo warns that for journalists, protecting themselves from the arbitrary application of *persbreidel* would be the biggest challenge. If politicians like Soekardjo were concerned about the controlling aspect of *persbreidel*, some journalists focused more on the economic effects. *Sin Tit Po*, a Surabaya-based Chinese-Malay newspaper and organ of the Chinese Indonesian Party (*Partai Tionghoa Indonesia*), gave a slightly different view. In an article entitled “What is the meaning of Press Curbing Ordinance to Journalism,”⁴²² a writer pen-named “Sar.”⁴²³ contends that the main purpose of the ordinance is essentially to interrupt the newspaper’s business and cause financial damage to the paper. If a paper is suspended for a week or so, it would not only lose subscribers, it would also lose advertising sponsors, especially the European ones, who would not want to be

⁴²² Sar., “Artinja persbreidel boeat Journalistiek,” *Sin Tit Po*, 14 August 1933.

⁴²³ The author behind the initial “Sar.” appears to be J. D. Syaranamual, who was an editor of *Sin Tit Po* (a colleague of Liem Koen Hian) at the time and later moved to *Soeara Oemoem*, the organ of the Soerabaja-based Party of the Indonesian Nation (*Partai Bangsa Indonesia*) led by Dr. Soetomo.

associated with politically problematic newspapers. For “Sar.” this is how the government kills nonconformist newspapers.

From “Sar.” and Soekardjo, we get a sense of how journalists and nationalists perceived the newly installed *persbreidel*. On the one hand they were troubled by its extra-judicial nature, and on the other they also paid attention to its economic effects on individual newspaper business. With such double impact, *persbreidel* exerted great pressure on newspapers to perform a kind of self-censorship in order to avoid suspension.

Newspaper reports on *persbreidel* did not quite expose how the ordinance worked. When it was introduced, the standard process to apply *persbreidel* had already been fixed. According to the ordinance’s text – that is, on paper – it was up to the regional Resident to submit a document to the Prosecutor General, in which he provided the name of the periodical and the actual article that was perceived to be potentially threatening to public order and peace. Sometimes, the local secret police or the Bureau for East Asian Affairs (*Dienst der Oost-Aziatische Zaken*) prepared this document and reported to the regional Resident. At this stage, the Resident made a recommendation as to the phase of *persbreidel* that was to be invoked for a given periodical as penalty. After having received this suggestion, the Prosecutor General proposed the punishment to the Governor-General. With the proposal, the Governor-General then authorized the application of *persbreidel* against the periodical. The Resident or Assistant Resident of the related region was then informed of the decision. This whole process usually took four to five weeks. According to the way the ordinance was written, *persbreidel* was to involve a fairly careful process of investigation that would typically last four to five weeks; in reality, as we shall see, the manner in which the ordinance was actually executed in specific cases varied greatly, having more to do with the political interests of the state than any interest in proper

and consistent application of an administrative measure. Thus according to the official format to be followed for the execution of *persbreidel*, the regional administrative apparatus was to play a central role in identifying local newspapers that were threatening to cause instability in the public order through their news coverage or were publishing material that was offensive towards other members of the community. The Regional administrative apparatus was also to take an active role in stipulating the punishment to be meted out in *persbreidel* cases. But as I will describe later, this format was altered in the latter half of the 1930s, when *persbreidel* mainly focused on the Chinese press in the Indies.

The actual process of applying *persbreidel* was more complicated. The first case of *persbreidel* was applied just two months after it went into effect and was announced in *Javansche Courant*. This case involved *Warna Warta* (News Variety), a Chinese-Malay newspaper in Semarang, which formally drew *persbreidel* charges on November 19, 1932.⁴²⁴ The Resident of Semarang stated in a secret document addressed to the State Governor of Central Java (No. 530/G.P.Z.) dated September 22, 1932, that since June 7 of that year, *persdelict Warna Warta* had been publishing a series of articles that could be charged with. *Warna Warta* had a history of more than thirty years of publication in Semarang and had a great influence on the local Chinese community. The Resident's report insisted that *Warna Warta* had carried a series of articles on the ongoing conflicts between Japan and China, which he maintained could spur an anti-Japanese sentiment among the Chinese community. The State Governor of Central Java subsequently submitted a proposal to the Prosecutor General on this matter on September 29 (no. 1758/68 secret document). On October 17, the Prosecutor General wrote a summary of legal action to the Governor-General (no. 4872/A.P. secret document), in which he maintained that since inter-racial relations

⁴²⁴ Mr. 1161x/32.

were generally worsening in the Indies, it was advisable to take a punitive action against *Warna Warta* that would also prevent its reporting from further exacerbating the race-relations problem. The Prosecutor General then decided to apply the first instance of *persbreidel* to *Warna Warta*. On the same day the Prosecutor General sent a letter to the State Governor of Central Java (no. 4871/A.P.), explaining that even if *persdelict* could be applied in the case of *Warna Warta*, taking into consideration the socio-political situation in the Indies, the troublesome articles could destabilize inter-racial harmony in the Indies and endanger the public order, therefore *persbreidel* was to be invoked. On October 31, the Council of the Netherlands Indies (*Raad van Nederlandsch-Indië*) discussed the Prosecutor General's summary of legal action (Commisoriaal no. 4267 to the Council of the Netherlands Indies, secret document, dated October 17). Five days later the Council decided to act on the summary, and on November 19 the Governor-General approved the application of *persbreidel* (no. 286/A, secret document). It was the first implementation of *persbreidel* in the first phase, and *Warna Warta* had to temporarily shut down its operation. The whole process took approximately two months, which showed that in this initial case, the authorities took serious consideration in applying *persbreidel*.

The application of *persbreidel* proceeded from the bottom-up of the administrative structure. It was the residents or governors who had the authority to propose *persbreidel* charges and specify the period of suspension of the publisher's business. The other government administrators involved in the process had only to assess whether or not the proposal was adequate. With the exception of only one case, the length of punishment proposed by the resident to the Prosecutor General was never reduced.⁴²⁵ In other words, once the governor or resident decided to apply *persbreidel*

⁴²⁵ Mr. 1356x/1935. This was the case of *Pahlawan Moeda*, which was shut down temporarily on December 18, 1935. The original proposal insisted on the application of the second phase of

to a certain newspaper and its publisher and printer, it was most likely to be approved by the higher administrators. While formally the government had specified a careful process of consideration that would take months to complete, in fact, *persbreidel* charges were often rammed through, reflecting their essentially political function. So the key to the question of whether or not *persbreidel* was applied depended on how the governor or resident thought about certain newspaper and its coverage.

Trends of Persbreidel Cases

During the course of ten years from 1931 to 1940, based on my tally there were eighty-five cases of *persbreidel* reported in the secret colonial documents. It is difficult to confirm the final accuracy of this number because *persbreidel* cases were decided behind closed doors and documentation was kept secret, but the evidence shows that *persbreidel* clearly worked to stifle the press.

Table 7-2: The List of Newspapers charged with *Persbreidel*

Date	1st phase	2nd phase	Newspaper	City
11/8/1932	X		<i>Warna Warta</i> (M)	Semarang
6/15/1933		X (3 wks)	<i>West-Java Courant</i> (D)	Batavia
8/21/1933	X		<i>Persatoean Indonesia</i> <PI>	Batavia
9/21/1933	X		<i>Fikiran Rajat</i> <PPPI>	Batavia
9/21/1933	X		<i>Berdjoang Oentoek Merdeka</i> <*PI>	Pekalongan
10/30/1933		X (30 days)	<i>Persatoean Indonesia</i> <PI>	Batavia
11/7/1933	X		<i>Soeara Oemoem</i> <PBI>	Soerabaja
11/21/1933	X		<i>Medan Ra'jat</i> <PMI>	Padang
12/2/1933	X		<i>Pahlawan Moeda</i> <HPH>	Fort de Kock
1/5/1934	X		<i>Pewartas</i>	Padang
1/6/1934	X		<i>Api</i>	Madison
1/7/1934 (?)	X		<i>Proletar</i> <PBKI>	Soerabaja
1/10/1934	X		<i>Sikap</i>	Jogjakarta
1/13/1934	X		<i>Indonesia Raja</i> <PPPI>	Batavia

persbreidel, which stopped publication for a period of four months. But for unclear reasons the Governor-General decreased it to the first phase.

Table 7-2 (Continued)				
2/1934 (?)	X		<i>Pelita</i>	Padang
2/2/1934	X		<i>Soeloeh Rakjat</i> <PI>	Pangkalpinang
2/2/1934	X		<i>Garoeda Merapi</i> <IM>	Jogjakarta
2/17/1934	X		<i>Indische Courant</i> (D)	Soerabaja
2/17/1934	X		<i>Algemeen Handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië</i> (D)	Semarang
2/17/1934	X		<i>Midden-Java</i> (D)	Jogjakarta
3/14/1934	X		<i>Sipatahoenan</i> (S, Pasoendan)	Bandoeng
7/20/1934	X		<i>Soeara Kalimantan</i>	Bandjarmasin
10/1934 (?)	X		<i>Nieuws van den Dag van Nederlandsch- Indië</i> (D)	Batavia
11/9/1934		X (6 days)	<i>Pewarta</i>	Padang
12/15/1934	X		<i>Indië -Hou-Zee</i> (D)	Batavia
12/18/1934	X (?)		<i>Pahlawan Moeda</i> <HPH>	Fort de Kock
6/13/1935	X		<i>Oetoesan Indonesia</i>	Jogjakarta
6/13/1935	X		<i>Adil</i>	Soerakarta
12/18/1935	X		<i>Pahlawan Moeda</i> <HPH>	Fort de Kock
1/8/1936	X		<i>Indonesia Berdjoang</i>	Soerabaja
2/4/1936	X		<i>Al-Islaah</i> (M)	Bangkalan
4/17/1936	X		<i>Radio</i> (M)	Padang
5/5/1936	X		<i>Sin Po</i> (M)	Batavia
6/23/1936	X		<i>Indonesia Moeda</i> <IM>	Batavia
7/8/1936		X (3 months)	<i>Al-Islaah</i> (M)	Bangkalan
8/27/1936 (?)	X		<i>Sumatra Bin Poh</i> (C)	Medan
9/1936 (?)	X		<i>Masjarakat</i>	Batavia
10/15/1936		X	<i>New China</i> (C)	Medan
10/25/1936 (?)	X		<i>Sin Po</i> (C)	Batavia
10/27/1936		X (8 days)	<i>Sin Po</i> (M)	Batavia
5/15/1937 (?)	X		<i>Thien Sung Yit Po</i> (C)	Batavia
5/19/1937	X		<i>Tay Kong Siang Po</i> (C)	Soerabaja
6/5/1937		X (14 days) (?)	<i>Sumatra Bin Poh</i> (C)	Medan
6/19/1937		X (8 days) (?)	<i>Thien Sung Yit Po</i> (C)	Batavia
7/1937		X (8 days) (?)	<i>Tay Kong Siang Po</i> (C)	Soerabaja
7/1937 (?)	X		<i>Soeara Mataram</i> (M)	Jogjakarta
3/19/1938 (?)	X		<i>Sinar Selatan</i> (M/J)	Semarang
4/5/1938	X		<i>Het Nationale Weekblad</i> (D)	Batavia
4/5/1938	X		<i>Sin Tit Po</i> (M)	Soerabaja
5/4/1938 (?)	X		<i>Soerabaja Post</i> (C)	Soerabaja
6/28/1938	X		<i>Thien Sung Yit Po</i> (C)	Batavia
7/9/1938	X		<i>Sin Po</i> (C)	Batavia
7/9/1938	X		<i>Chiao Sheng Weekly</i> (C)	Pontianak

Table 7-2 (Continued)				
7/9/1938		X (8 days)	<i>Sin Tit Po</i> (M)	Soerabaja
7/14/1938	X		<i>Tay Kong Siang Po</i> (C)	Soerabaja
7/28/1938	X		<i>Keng Po</i> (M)	Batavia
8/6/1938	X		<i>Ta Chung Shih Chieh Weekly</i> (C)	Batavia
8/30/1938		X (8 days)	<i>Tay Siang Po</i> (C)	Soerabaja
9/5/1938	X		<i>Shang Pao</i> (C)	Soerabaja
9/17/1938		X (8 days)	<i>Tay Kong Siang Po</i> (C)	Soerabaja
10/5/1938	X		<i>Hua Chiao Yit Pao</i> (C)	Makassar
10/9/1938		X (8 days)	<i>Sinar Selatan</i> (M)	Semarang
10/13/1938		X (3 wks)	<i>Ta Chung Shih Chieh Weekly</i> (C)	Batavia
10/28/1938	X		<i>Sinar Selatan</i> (M/J)	Semarang
11/18/1938		X (3 wks)	<i>Het Nationale Weekblad</i> (D)	Batavia
1/21/1939	X		<i>Foto Journal</i> (M)	Batavia
2/7/1939	X		<i>Tohindo Nippo</i> (J)	Batavia
2/24/1939		X (3 wks)	<i>Ta Chung Shih Chieh Weekly</i> (C)	Batavia
3/3/1939	X		<i>Hua Chiao Yit Pao</i> (C)	Makassar
3/25/1939	X		<i>Sin Po</i> (M)	Batavia
4/26/1939		X (8 days)	<i>Sin Po</i> (C)	Batavia
7/31/1939		X (3 wks)	<i>Ta Chung Shih Chieh Weekly</i> (C)	Batavia
9/5/1939		X (?)	<i>Tay Kong Siang Po</i> (C)	Soerabaja
9/11/1939	X		<i>Thien Sung Yit Po</i> (C)	Batavia
9/23/1939	X		<i>Sin Po</i> (C)	Batavia
9/30/1939	X		<i>Tohindo Nippo</i> (C)	Batavia
9/30/1939		X (14 days)	<i>Hua Chiao Yit Pao</i> (C)	Makassar
11/25/1939		X (14 days)	<i>Sin Po</i> (C)	Batavia
2/9/1940		X (6 wks)	<i>De Heraut</i> (D)	Bandoeng
3/15/1940		X (8 days)	<i>Sin Po</i> (M)	Batavia
3/15/1940		X (8 days)	<i>Sin Po</i> (C)	Batavia
3/20/1940		X (8 days)	<i>Thien Sung Yit Po</i> (C)	Batavia
3/21/1940		X (3 wks)	<i>Tohindo Nippo</i> (C)	Batavia
3/23/1940	X		<i>Pewarta Soerabaja</i> (M)	Soerabaja
4/22/1940	X		<i>Het Nationale Weekblad</i> (D)	Batavia
<p>[Source: Mailrapporten and Verbalen (1932-40) held in the Algemeene Rijsarchief, Den Haag]</p> <p>Dates indicate when Governor-General's decision (besluit van Governor-Generaal) was made.</p> <p>Explanatory Remarks: (14 days) means that a certain correspondent periodical has been ordered to shut down for its printing, publication and selling for the period of fourteen days.</p> <p>C: Chinese, J: Japanese, M: Malay or Chinese-Malay, D: Dutch, S: Sundanese languages.</p> <p>W: Weder toepassing 2de fase</p> <p>◊ has the name of political party.</p>				

My examination of these cases reveals six key points about the way that *persbreidel* was applied in the Dutch Indies: First, *persbreidel* did not solely target Indonesian nationalistic newspapers. Out of eighty-five cases, it was invoked only twenty-seven times against twenty-two nationalistic-oriented newspapers. Newspapers representing three other “racial groups” found themselves subject to temporary closure due to *persbreidel*. Eleven of these cases were against eight Dutch newspapers, and six cases were brought against three Japanese-owned newspapers. Most importantly, eighteen Chinese newspapers were temporarily shut down a total of forty-one times. That is, nine Chinese newspapers were slapped with *persbreidel* more than twice.

A second important point to note about *persbreidel* is that some significant changes in the application of this ordinance took place between the first and latter half of the 1930s. In the first half of the 1930s *persbreidel* was applied largely to major radical newspapers in Java and Sumatra, whereas in the latter half of the 1930s Batavia and Soerabaja were particularly monitored by the colonial authorities. After 1936 cases of *persbreidel* doubled in number compared to the first four years. Up to 1935 there were only twenty-eight cases, while the other fifty-nine cases occurred between 1936 and 1940.

A third feature of *persbreidel* in the Indies colony was the grouping that may be discerned among the Indonesian nationalist and radical newspapers that were the main target of the ordinance until 1935.⁴²⁶ These newspapers fell into four major categories:

⁴²⁶ Here I will list the source of colonial documents are appeared. Mr. 977x/33, 992x/33, 1239x/33, 1246x/33, 174x/34; Mr. 1321x/33, 1350x/33; Mr. 876x/36; Mr. 66x/34; Mr. 173x/34; Mr. 363x/34; Mr. 1378x/35, 10x/36, 34x/36; Mr. 1179x/34, 654x/35, 840x/35, 1084x/35; Mr. 1131x/33, 1132x/33; Mr. 1287x/33, 32x/34; Mr. 29x/34, 1238x/34; Mr. 57x/34; Mr. 606x/36, 686x/36; Mr. 653x/35; Mr. 1296x/33; Mr. 1400x/33; Mr. 1452/33, 1356x/35; Mr. 110x/36, 613x/36, 661x/36; Mr. 29x/34, 50x/34, 154x/34; Mr. 206x/35; Mr. 853x/34.

(1) Nationalist newspapers: Included in this category were *Persatoean Indonesia* (Indonesian Union, PI), known as the organ of the Indonesian Party (*Partai Indonesia*, PI) led by Soekarno, as well as *Berdjoang Oentoek Merdeka* (“Fighting for Independence,” Pekalongan in East Java) and *Soeloeh Rakjat* (“People’s Torch,” Pangkalpinang in West Sumatra) which were both local organs of the same party. The Soerabaja-based Association of Indonesian Nation (*Persatoean Bangsa Indonesia*, PBI) led by Dr. Soetomo published the daily *Soeara Oemoem* (“Public’s Voice”), while the Batavia-based Association of Indonesian Students (*Perhimpoean Peladjar-Peladjar Indonesia*, PPPI) issued the daily *Indonesia Raja* (“Great Indonesia”), and the organization known as Indonesian National Education (*Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia*, PNI) issued *Masjarakat* (“Community”). The category also includes *Garoeda Merapi* (“Merapi Eagle”) by the Mataram chapter of Young Indonesia (*Indonesia Moeda*), Pasoendan’s organ *Sipatahoenan*, and Soerabaja’s *Indonesia Berdjoang* (“Indonesia Fights”).

(2) Radical newspapers: Falling into this group were those newspapers that generally propagated revolutionary political discourse and made attempts to mobilize the mass. The category includes the Batavia-based youth organization Young Indonesia (*Indonesia Moeda*, IM), which published their main news organ under the same name, *Indonesia Moeda*, while local branches of the organization issued *Oetoesan Indonesia* (“Indonesian Envoy,” Jogjakarta in Central Java), *Proletar* (“The Proletarian” in Soerabaja, East Java), *Fikiran Rakjat* (“People’s Thoughts” in Batavia), *Api* (“Fire” in Madioen, East Java), and *Pewarta* (“Messenger” in Padang, West Sumatra).

(3) Islamic-oriented newspapers: Moehammadijah’s branch in Soerakarta, Central Java had its organ *Adil* (“Impartial”), the Padang-based Indonesian Muslim Union (*Persatoean Moeslim Indonesia*) had *Medan Ra’jat* (“People’s Arena”), and the

Association of Islamic Youth (*Himpoenan Pemoeda Islam Indonesia*) in Padang and Fort de Kock, West Sumatra had *Pahlawan Moeda* (“Young Hero”). Madoera-based *Al-Islaah* (The Reform) was somewhat later case of *persbreidel* for this category, forced to shut down for three months in 1936 because its editor, led by Moehamad Saleh Seaidhi, were repeatedly charged with *persdelict*.

(4) Offensive Presses: These are newspapers which were charged with offending the Indies government and were consequently shut down temporarily. This category includes *Sikap* (“Stance,” Jogjakarta), *Pelita* (“Lantern,” Padang), and *Soeara Kalimantan* (“Voice of Kalimantan,” Bandjarmasin in South Borneo).

A fourth important point to note about the history of *persbreidel* in the Indies is that Dutch newspapers were also subject to temporary suspension in the early and late 1930s.⁴²⁷ In the first half of the 1930s they included *West-Java Courant* (Batavia), *Indische Courant* (Soerabaja), *Midden-Java* (Jogjakarta), *Algemeen Handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Semarang, Central Java), *Nieuws van den Dag van Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batavia), and *Indië -Hou-Zee* (Batavia); in the latter half of the 1930s *Het Nationale Weekblad* (Batavia) and *De Heraut* (Bandoeng, West Java) were likewise victims of *persbreidel*. The former cases involved the *Zeven Provinciën* uprising in February 1933, which was a mutiny due to the pay-cut that took place on a Dutch warship.⁴²⁸ As reporting on the uprising became ever more extensive and widely read, which could potentially stimulate labor unrest in the Indies, it was deemed threatening to public order in the Indies and Indies officials attempted

⁴²⁷ Mr. 286x/33, 727x/33; Mr. 257x/34; Mr. 1393x/34; Mr. 1138x/34; Mr. 267x/38; Mr. 1057x/38, 1084x/38 in Vb. 1-12-38-D39, 35x/39 in Vb. 9-3-39-S8; Mr. 315x/39, 572x/40 in Vb. 27-4-39-J16; Mr. 109x/40 in Vb. 4-3-40-G14.

⁴²⁸ On February 4, 1933, a group of ten Indonesian sailors seized the firearms and ammunition on board and took over the ship. Almost all other Indonesian crew members aboard along with some Europeans joined the mutiny. On February 10, an aeroplane dropped a bomb on the ship and the mutiny came to an end. There existed the suggestion that a communist or Indonesian nationalist cell organized the mutiny, while a Dutch historian Blom rejected such view by relating it to the Dutch political debate in the parliament concerning how to handle the Indies unstable situation. J. C. H. Blom, *De muiterij op de Zeven Provinciën* (Bussum: Fiblula-Van Dishoeck, 1975).

to contain. By temporarily suspending the reporting papers, the authorities tried to contain the perceived threat. This particular incident even led to talks of intensifying *persbreidel* and introducing even more severe censorship regulations in the Indies. According to this line of reasoning maintaining the public order and tranquility (*bescherming van den openbare orde*) during periods of tension in society (*tijden van spanning*) made thorough containment of anti-governmental campaigns (*anti-gezagscampagnes*) a major imperative for the state.⁴²⁹ This argument however failed to get enough support and did not, in the end, lead to a more suppressive *persbreidel*.

After 1938, the Indies state was mainly concerned with war-related articles in Europe. The Dutch press in the Netherlands paid special attention to the rise of Nazism in Germany from the beginning of the 1930s.⁴³⁰ Yet in the Indies, the colonial government tried to contain reports on contemporary affairs in Europe, especially those related to Nazism. *Het Nationale Weekblad*, which had changed its name from *Indië-Hou-Zee* in 1938, was suspended for carrying articles on the political situation in the Netherlands. In the case of *De Heraut* the incriminating articles that triggered *persbreidel* action dealt with on subjects of war and anti-Nazism in Europe.

A fifth point about *persbreidel* concerns the Chinese newspapers, which became the most frequent target of *persbreidel* action in the latter half of the 1930s. Here, victims included newspapers in both Chinese and Chinese-Malay languages. These newspapers drew *persbreidel* action for two major reasons: Articles deemed offensive to the colonial authorities, as was the case with *Warna Warta* in Semarang and *Soerabaja Post* in Soerabaja; and articles deemed to be anti-Japanese. In fact, after 1936, the latter became the only cause for temporary suspension of Chinese newspapers.

⁴²⁹ Mr. 604x/34.

⁴³⁰ Frank van Vree, *De Nederlandse pers en Duitsland 1930-1939: Een studie over de vorming van de publieke opinie* (Groningen: Historische Uitgeverij Groningen, 1989).

Colonial authorities issued two types of colonial secret documents in connection with *persbreidel* action against Chinese newspapers. The first type of document was the usual secret mail report, and the second, known as *verbal*, was comprised of secret mail reports organized under similar topics and affairs as similar press curbing cases occurred and were filed together. The first type in ordinary secret mail reports dealt with the individual cases of *Sumatra Bin Poh* (Medan), *New China* (Medan), *Thien Sung Yit Po*, *Tay Kong Siang Po*, *Ta Chung Shih Chieh Weekly*, *Tay Siang Po* (Soerabaja), *Sin Po*, *Hua Chiao Yit Pao*, *Radio* (Padang), and *Soeara Mataram* (Jogjakarta).⁴³¹ The second document type for *persbreidel* against Chinese newspapers consisted of three *verbaalen* in 1938, one in 1939, and two in 1940. The *verbaal* of May 24, 1938⁴³² involved the case of *Sin Tit Po* (Soerabaja), the news organ of the Indonesian Chinese Party (*Partai Tionghoa Indonesia*, PTI); the *verbaal* of June 7, 1938⁴³³ contained documentation on the cases of *Shang Pao* (Soerabaja) and *Tay Kong Sinag Po* (Soerabaja); and the *verbaal* of August 11, 1938⁴³⁴ included cases of *Thien Sung Yit Po* (Batavia), *Tay Kong Siang Po*, *Sin Po* (Batavia), *Sin Tit Po*, *Keng Po* (Batavia), and *Chiao Sheng Weekly* (Pontianak). The *verbaal* of February 24, 1939⁴³⁵ documented the case of *Foto Journal* (Batavia). The *verbaal* of January 24, 1940⁴³⁶ carried detail on the cases of *Sin Po*, *Thien Sung Yit Po*, *Tay Kong Siang Po*, *Ta Chung Shih Chieh Weekly* (Batavia), and *Hua Chiao Yit Pao* (Makassar). The *verbaal* of 5 April 1940⁴³⁷ is the last one in the colonial mail reports and dealt

⁴³¹ As appeared in order. Mr. 798x/36, 458x/37, 480x/37, 620x/37; Mr. 1021x/36, 599x/37, 250x/38, 342x/38, 362x/38; Mr. 385x/37, 551x/37; Mr. 1053x/36, 431x/37, 600x/37, 853x/38; Mr. 890x/38; Mr. 898x/38, 944x/38; Mr. 797x/38; Mr. 341x/36, 423x/36, 1053x/36, 1056x/36, 1102x/36; Mr. 859x/38, 921x/38; Mr. 110x/36, 342x/36.

⁴³² Mr. 577x/38; Mr. 255x/38, 269x/38, 297x/38 in Vb. 24-5-38-F17.

⁴³³ Mr. 400x/38 in Vb. 7-6-38-R18.

⁴³⁴ Mr. 566x/38, 578x/38, 624x/38, 623x/38, 635x/38, 654x/38, 691x/38, 738x/38 in Vb. 11-8-38-C26.

⁴³⁵ Mr. 87x/39 in Vb. 24-2-39-B7.

⁴³⁶ Mr. 721x/38, 231x/39, 237x/39, 332x/39, 446x/39, 740x/39, 803x/39, 951x/39, 1007x/39, 1113x/39, 1088x/39, 1371x/39 in Vb. 25-1-40-K5.

⁴³⁷ Mr. 274x/40, 360x/40, 361x/40, 383x/40, 384x/40, 398x/40, 401x/40 in Vb. 5-4-40-M21.

with cases of *Sin Po*, *Tohindo Nippo* (Batavia), *Thien Sung Yit Po*, and *Pewarta Soerabaja* (Soerabaja).

The sixth point to make about *persbreidel* actions in the Indies concerns the Japanese-owned newspapers, represented by *Sinar Selatan* (“Southern Gleam”) in Semarang and *Tohindo Nippo* (“Indies Daily”) in Batavia, which published Japanese as well as Chinese editions. *Sinar Selatan* was considered a semi-official Japanese periodical in that it promulgated pan-Asianism. It tried to stir sympathy among the indigenous population towards Japan with news coverage and editorializing that was anti-Chinese and anti-Western. The colonial authorities consequently regarded *Sinar Selatan* as a dangerous element of the Indies press that encouraged harmful sentiments among ethnic groups in the Indies.⁴³⁸ After having been suspended by *persbreidel* action issued on October 28, 1938, *Sinar Selatan* discontinued its publication by the end of 1938. *Tohindo Nippo* also promoted Japan’s pan-Asianism with similar anti-Chinese and anti-Western tones. It was suspended several times as a result.⁴³⁹ The Chinese weekly of *Tohindo Nippo* was also charged under the second phase of *persbreidel*, culminating in the weekly’s suspension in April 1940.⁴⁴⁰

There is an important chronological dimension to the six features of *persbreidel* that I have outlined above. Eighty-five cases of *persbreidel* in the Dutch Indies involved forty-nine newspapers, with a number of newspapers falling victim more than once. Execution of *persbreidel* as an administrative measure, *persbreidel* did not happen haphazardly coincidence. Rather, *persbreidel* action came about as the result of consistent surveillance by the authorities, while different newspapers were targeted for different reasons. A 1933 article in *Sin Tit Po* informs us that the

⁴³⁸ Mr. 185x/37, 222x/38, 225x/38, 247x/38; 687x/38 in Vb. 11-8-38-C26, 893x/38; 957x/38, 976x/38, 1018x/38 in Vb. 25-1-40-L5, 796x/39, 893x/38.

⁴³⁹ Mr. 89x/39, 149x/39, 690x/39, 1137x/39, 1321x/39, 1401x/39, 1137x/39, 1321x/39, 1401x/39 all in Vb. 25-1-40-L5; Mr. 605x/39, 620x/39, 638x/39.

⁴⁴⁰ Mr. 457x/40 in V 10-4-40-R24; Mr. 492x/40 in Vb. 24-4-40-V25.

government had prepared a watch-list of newspapers, and that individual papers would stay on the list for a year.⁴⁴¹ Thus it appears that even before *persbreidel* was applied to individual cases, the authorities already knew which newspapers they had in their crosshairs and were waiting simply for a trigger that would set off administrative action. The question then becomes: What were the criteria used by the authorities to single out certain newspapers for *persbreidel* action? To answer this, it is necessary to consider the wider political context in which *persbreidel* was applied.

Soekarno, Soetomo, and Permi

For the first half of the 1930s the Indies state focused its attention primarily on two areas – Batavia and West Sumatra – due to nationalistic and religious political activism in these regions. In Batavia the state targeted the secular nationalist parties – Sukarno’s Indonesian Party, known in abbreviation as *Partindo*, and Hatta and Sjahrir’s Indonesian National Education (*Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia*, PNI) or the New PNI (*PNI Baru*). In the case of West Sumatra, two religious-based parties, which were founded or revived after 1928, and their leaders posed the biggest threat – Union of Indonesian Muslims or Permi (*Persatuan Muslimin Indonesia*), and the Minangkabau branch of the Indonesian Islamic League Party or PSII (*Partai Sarikat Islam Indonesia*). The colonial state also paid special attention to radical religious activities that could potentially turn into a subversive movement.

Placing the history of *persbreidel* action against this political context reveals the way in which colonial authorities used *persbreidel* to silence individuals or political and religious organizations that were deemed to be a major threat to the state. Residents in general kept surveillance over allegedly dangerous political figures and organizations, and waited for “the right time” to apply *persbreidel*. All of the

⁴⁴¹ “Sebab Apa “Soeara Oemoem” kena Persberidel?,” *Sin Tit Po*, June 29, 1933.

persbreidel cases against the Indonesian press occurred after Soekarno was arrested for the second time in August 1933.

Soekarno was the most provocative nationalist leader at the time.⁴⁴² Born on June 6, 1901 in Blitar, East Java, he was admitted into a Dutch school and then attended a HBS school in Soerabaja in 1916. In Soerabaja he received room and board in the house of boarded at Tjokroaminoto, the leader of SI of Soerabaja and a great preacher. From Tjokroaminoto Soekarno learned the spirit of nationalism and political activism. In 1921 he commenced his studies at the Technical Institute (*Technische Hogeschool*) in Bandoeng. In 1927 he founded the Indonesian National Party (*Partai Nasional Indonesia*, PNI), advocating national emancipation and opposition to imperialism and capitalism, which he saw as only undermining the wellbeing of the Indonesian people. Soekarno was arrested in December 1929 and sentenced to two years in prison. Put on trial for sedition in 1930, Soekarno gave his eloquent speech in his own defense on December 2, 1930, that was later published as a book entitled *Indonesia Menggoegat* ("Indonesia Accuses").⁴⁴³ By the time he was released, he had become a popular hero and political legend. In 1932 he established the Indonesian Party, Partindo, because PNI had been dissolved in April 1931 while he was in prison. Partindo soon gained thousands of members and supporters, which intensified the call for independence. It was at this moment, in 1933, that Soekarno was detained for the second time. Yet the colonial authorities were unsuccessful at suppressing political activism with his arrest and found themselves with growing fear

⁴⁴² For biography Soekarno, see Bernhard Dahm, *Sukarno and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969); John D. Legge, *Sukarno: A Political Biography* (New York: Praeger, 1972); Bob B. Hering, *Soekarno, founding father of Indonesia: a biography* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002).

⁴⁴³ Its Dutch translation was published in 1931. Soekarno, *Indonesië klaagt aan!: pleitrede voor den Landraad te Bandoeng op 2 December 1930 gehouden door Ir. Soekarno* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers voor het "Fonds Nasional," 1931). Soekarno, *Indonesia accuses!: Soekarno's defence oration in the political trial of 1930* (Kuala Lumpur, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

that the nationalist movement would escalate. This political atmosphere led to the aggressive application of *persbreidel* against radical vernacular press, resulting in six suspensions in 1933 and eleven in 1934. This political context explains how and why it came about that certain vernacular newspapers were penalized with *persbreidel*. In many of these cases, the administrative action taken did not follow standard procedure spelled out in the *persbreidel* ordinance. To colonial authorities invoked *persbreidel* based on very quick administrative decisions – rather than on the results of careful investigation – that were often not recorded in any accompanying official, albeit secret documentation. A *persbreidel* case against the Soerabaja-based *Soeara Oemoem* (“Public Voice”) is a notable example of such irregularity. The newspaper was suspended for eight days, from August 16 until 23 due to *persbreidel* action⁴⁴⁴ that was not reported in any colonial secret documents.

Soeara Oemoem was the news organ of the Union of Indonesian Nation or PBI, whose objective was to improve the social status of the Indonesian people. It was established in 1930 by Dr. Soetomo, one of the pioneers of the nationalist movement. Born on July 30, 1888, in Lotjeret, Nganjuk, East Java, Soetomo studied at STOVIA, the colonial medical college for natives, in Batavia from 1903 and 1911.⁴⁴⁵ As a student in 1908, he founded Boedi Oetomo, an association generally regarded as the earliest nationalist organization. After graduating from STOVIA in 1911, he worked as a government physician in Java and Sumatra for eight years. Then he went to the Netherlands to study medical science from 1919 until 1923, during which he became chairman of the Indies (Students) Association (*Indische Vereeniging*) for the period of 1921-1922. Upon his return to the Indies, he established the Indonesian Study Club in Soerabaja in 1924, which six years later was converted into a political party, the PBI.

⁴⁴⁴ “Soeara Oemoem” Ditoeteop: Moelai besok pagi sampe tanggal 23 Agustus,” *Sin Tit Po*, Augustus 15, 1933.

⁴⁴⁵ Savitri Scherer, “Soetomo and Trade Unionism,” *Indonesia*, No. 24 (October 1977), pp. 27-38.

He was not a great orator like his contemporary nationalist Soekarno, but he contributed many articles to various publications in the vernacular press, and his wit and charm attracted many young Indonesians as well as Chinese and even Japanese followers. Participants of his private meetings enjoyed lively discussions with Dr. Soetomo and other attendants.⁴⁴⁶ Because of his popularity and influence, the colonial authorities watched him and his activities closely.

Several aspects of *Soeara Oemoem*'s *persbreidel* underscore the irregularity of the case. To begin, the basis of the charge was the commentary that the newspaper made in an article titled "*Tinggallah sabar dan tenang*" ("Stay patient and calm") that was published in its August 2, 1933 edition. The article was deemed dangerous (*berbahaja*) because it dealt with Soekarno's recent arrest.⁴⁴⁷ But another Soerabaja-based paper of the vernacular press, *Sin Tit Po*, was not charged with *persbreidel*, even though it too published articles on Soekarno's arrest, including one titled "*Ir. Soekarno Ditangkep Lagi: Kenapa Diwaktue Malem!*" ("Soekarno Arrested Again: Why at Night!")⁴⁴⁸ on August 3, 1933 and another, titled "*Tentang Penangkapan Ir. Soekarno*" ("Regarding Soekarno's Arrest"),⁴⁴⁹ published on August 4. Both articles reported that Soekarno was arrested because of his provocative speeches at political rallies, and that for the arrest, police applied article 153 bis and ter of the Penal Code concerning the violation of public order and peace. The second remarkable aspect of this case was the speed with which the decision to invoke *persbreidel* was made. The decision appeared to have been made in ten days, or only one-fourth of the time

⁴⁴⁶ Interview with Ms Yasuko Hakim in Jakarta on February 17, 1999. Ms Hakim was born in Soerabaja with Japanese father and Javanese mother. Her father was a friend of Dr. Soetomo and her family was often invited to Dr. Soetomo's second house. The second floor of her father's house was a hangout for Japanese journalists such as Kaneko, Mominoki, Kozumi, and Kondo, and moreover Indonesian journalists often joined nightlong discussions.

⁴⁴⁷ "Sebabnja "Soeara Oemoem" Ditoetoep," *Sin Tit Po*, August 17, 1933.

⁴⁴⁸ "Ir. Soekarno Ditangkep Lagi: Kenapa Diwaktue Malem!" *Sin Tit Po*, August 3, 1933.

⁴⁴⁹ "Tentang Penangkapan Ir. Soekarno," *Sin Tit Po*, August 4, 1933.

expected for standard *persbreidel* procedure. It was through *Javaasche Courant* that on August 11 *Sin Tit Po* first learned of the news of the temporary closure of *Soeara Oemoem*.⁴⁵⁰ Clearly, the authorities were worried about something beyond the immediate impact of *Soeara Oemoem*'s article on Soekarno's arrest, since many other papers of the vernacular press covered Soekarno's arrest yet did not incur *persbreidel* action. The obvious reason for the charge against *Soeara Oemoem* was Dr. Soetomo himself. By taking *persbreidel* action against the newspaper, the Resident of Soerabaja was in effect acting against Soetomo, who was popular and influential among Soerabaja's activists. *Soeara Oemoem* had, after all, been on the government's watch-list of newspapers since late June 1933, and could have been charged with *persbreidel* at any time.⁴⁵¹ This particular case was the first suspension for *Soeara Oemoem*. The second incident, this time recorded in a colonial confidential report, came three months later on November 7, 1933. But, unlike many other nationalist newspapers, despite these suspensions, *Soeara Oemoem* did not fold. Two main factors supported the newspaper's survival. To begin, Soetomo's remained an active political leader until his death in 1938. In the late 1935 he established the Great Indonesia Party or *Parindra* (*Partai Indonesia Raya*) to seek a collaborative relationship with the Indies government. Its members included Soekardjo Wirjopranoto, Woeryaningrat, R. Pandji Soeroso, and Soesanto Tirtoprodjo. Secondly, *Soeara Oemoem* had solid financial support from the Indonesian National Bank (*Bank Nasional Indonesia*), which Soetomo had founded in 1930.

Another example of the colonial authorities' attempts to contain allegedly radical political activities using *persbreidel* can be found in the secret mail report of

⁴⁵⁰ ““Soeara Oemoem” Ditoetoep: Boeat delapan hari,” *Sin Tit Po*, August 12, 1933.

⁴⁵¹ This is what *Sin Tit Po* claims in its article, “Sebab Apa “Soeara Oemoem” kena Persbreidel?,” *Sin Tit Po*, June 29, 1933. The watch-list appears to include major local newspaper. In January 1934, a Jakarta-base daily, *Mataram*, received the warning for *persbreidel*, allegedly, due to its articles that invoked hatred towards the government. “Persbreidel di Vorstenlanden?” *Sin Tit Po*, January 4, 1934.

1296x/1933. This report dealt with the *persbreidel* case of *Medan Ra'jat* in Padang, which was known as a center of Islamic religious and education-related activism, and an epicenter of the communist uprisings in West Sumatra in 1927. Since the uprising, the Indies state kept a close surveillance on movement activities there, which forced organizers to adjust their political strategy. Even so, their radical tendency continued.⁴⁵²

The confidential mail report of No. 1296x of 1933 contained two confidential letters with an appendix as well as a copy of *Medan Ra'jat*, from which one can tell how the authorities censored the paper and what kind of expressions were picked up as problematic. *Medan Ra'jat* was the news organ of Union of Indonesian Muslims or *Permi*, published in Nias Padang. When the October 1, 1933 issue was published, its editor-in-chief, Iljas Yacoub, had been in jail since early September due to articles he had published on Permi activities.⁴⁵³

By the time *Medan Ra'jat* was temporarily suspended in October 1933, Permi was considered to be a radical Muslim as well as nationalist organization by the authorities. It was a direct descendant of the student organizations of the Sumatra Thawalib School, many of whose members participated in the Communist-led activities of the early 1920s. With emphasis on both Islam and nationalism, Permi was particularly active in schools, educational associations, youth groups, and in publishing newspapers and pamphlets. It was also associated with trade unions, religious organizations, and merchants' associations. Suppression of the revolt shattered the radical student associations within the schools, but in the early 1930s Permi was able to expand its influence in West Sumatra because of its clear anti-Dutch and anti-colonial position. By December 1932, it had about 160 groups throughout

⁴⁵² Kahin, *Rebellion to Integration*.

⁴⁵³ Along with Iljas Yacoub, other two Permi leaders, Muchtar Luthfi and Djaluluddin Thaib were exiled to Boven Digoel at the end of 1934. Kahin, *Rebellion to Integration*, pp. 53-56.

West Sumatra, with about 4,700 male and 3,000 female members; at one point the total reportedly reached 10,000. Its activities spread to Bengkulu, South Sumatra, Aceh, East Sumatra, and Tapanoeli.⁴⁵⁴ Newspapers reported that anti-colonial political activism led by Permi in West Sumatra and Tapanoeli was growing as well, which threatened to induce another rebellion.⁴⁵⁵ With this perceived threat to the colonial state growing, the situation around Permi's activism was increasingly tense by the middle of 1933.

On October 13, 1933, the Resident of West Sumatra in Padang wrote a confidential letter addressed to the Governor-General with a copy to the Prosecutor General. Its title was "proposal to apply *persbreidel* to Permi's organ *Medan Ra'jat*."⁴⁵⁶ The Resident strongly recommended the application of *persbreidel*, especially Article 1, due to *Medan Ra'jat*'s revolutionary tendencies and language. The letter drew attention to a particularly incriminating article, "*Disamping djalan National Reconstructie*" ("By the Roadside of National Reconstruction") in the newspaper's October 1, 1933 issue. A part of the Resident's letter is as follows:

Brief summary of the article entitled "Disamping Djalan National Reconstruction" in the 10-page daily *Medan Ra'jat* of 1 October 1933 is included.

After a brief history of the "Indonesian" national movement over the past 25 years, *Medan Ra'jat* points out that when the people become conscious that if one has the right to self-determination one's goal can be achieved, then they will strive to unlock their "colonial shackles"; the

⁴⁵⁴ Audrey Kahin, "Repression and Regroupment: Religious and Nationalist Organizations in West Sumatra in the 1930s," *Indonesia*, No. 38 (Oct. 1984), pp. 41-42.

⁴⁵⁵ "Apa Sumatra maoe berontak?," *Sin Tit Po*, June 7, 1933. *Sin Tit Po* received the news from *Pewarta Deli* on June 6, 1933.

⁴⁵⁶ Mr. 1296x/33.

newspaper adds that when leftist-political organizations in a colonized country openly pursue this freedom, the people will accept them with open arms and extraordinary interest.

Is such a goal banned? Can't a people seek to obtain their rights? The laws of the Netherlands Indies government give no assurance. It is very bad that the movement, which is based on justice and fairness, is faced with obstacles on the road. The civilized world recognizes that any emancipatory movement, based on human wisdom, should be legally recognized, as the following words of the former president of America Dr. W. Wilson emphasize: "Every people has the right to determine its own destiny."

In challenging the accusations launched against the leaders, the article points out that the (Indonesian) movement is not a product of the leaders; it is merely the manifestation of the feelings and spirit of the people. So it will not take a wrong or dangerous path. It may play cards, but is not a secret organization. At public as well as closed meetings, it deals with the same topics, so the Government can be pleased to note that the movement plays its cards openly, and can be easily monitored.

Because there is a real conflict between there (*sana*) and here (*sini*), it is no surprise that the white press incites the government and suggests that the movement's throats and hands and feet be chained, until it disappears. The article is not sure if the rigorous measures which the Government has taken against the popular movement – with the application of amended Articles a and b, in relation to the ban on gatherings, the reactivation of the travel-pass system, the house searches and the arrests of Ir. Soekarno and H. Moechter Loetfi – is known by the white press, as well the inaccuracy of the intelligence reports stating that the popular movement is planning another uprising. There

is no evidence that the leaders are committed to any such action. The article assumes that their arrest was made under “suspicion” or the “presumption that the public peace and order will be disturbed.” It is very concern about what kind of punishment they will receive. There are doubts about the accuracy of white press regarding the internment of more leaders.

After reporting the police’s warning to the board of the PI’s Bandoeng branch not to take any political actions. The paper goes on to say that extraordinary measures being taken are widening the political gulf between the Government and the people. Recalling a remark in *Pewarta* that the “*ninik and mamak*” [adat chiefs]⁴⁵⁷ in Padang Pandjang might cooperate to eradicate the popular movement, the newspaper replies: There is always something going on in a colonial society.

Then the paper points out that inflammatory reports of the Dutch extremist nationalists have further troubled atmosphere. It advises that every action against the popular movement be first maturely considered, because this movement is rooted in world history, because it is a movement to pursue social reform. No one should think that severe measures administered with an iron fist will be able to kill the emerging national spirit; on the contrary, the fortitude of the people will improve while their spirit will continue to spark. A hero of liberation in British India says: “Who is able to chain a people, if their minds do not desire to be chained?”

Keep in mind that:

1. The movement arises from the feelings of the masses, who make up the society, and not because of the leaders.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ninik-mamak* is a Minang term for *penghulu adat* (adat chief). *Adat* means custom.

2. The blood of the movement flows in the body of the youth, who will one day become its soul.

3. Since world history shows that repression however powerful never weakens the popular movement, the paper is fully convinced that the popular movement will not die, instead it will persist and bloom, especially if it is based on conviction.

Who will heal the wound in the hearts of the people, resulting from the arbitrary actions taken against the movement and its leaders, whom they love so much. As long as the people have leaders who understand how to guide the movement, it will not fade away. But who will be to blame, if the people deprived of the leaders snatched from their midst, then take a wrong path?

Finally, the newspaper says:

We, men of the movement, precisely at times like this, must strengthen our mind and conviction.

Fear, indolence, weakness, sorrow, sighing and moaning and rashness – we must cast aside, so far as we can, because they are all deadly poison to our movement.

Courage and vision we must not let go, because they are very sharp weapons in this battle.

People, you who strongly want freedom, your ideals will certainly be realized. Keep up your action!⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁸ Mr. 1296x/33 appendix.

Kort Inhoudspogave van het artikel onder het hoofd: “Disamping Djalan National Reconstructie,” dat in het 10-daagsch blad “Medan Ra’jat” van 1 October 1933 is opgenomen.

Na in het kort de ontwikkelingsgeschiedenis van de “Indonesische” volksbeweging gedurende de laatste 25 jaren te hebben gereleveerd, wijst de “Medan Ra’jat” er op, dat het volk, eerst nadat het ervan overtuigd en zich bewust geworden is, dat men zijn doel kan verwezenlijken, indien men zelfbeschikkingsrecht heeft, zijne verlossing van de “koloniale ketenen” nastreeft en dat de linke-politieke organisaties in een gekoloniseerd land met open vizier de vrijheid nastreven, door het volk met open armen worden ontvangen en op een buitengewone belangstelling kunnen rekenen.

Is zoo'n doelstelling verboden? Mag een volk dan niet streven naar verkrijging van zijn rechten? De wetten der N. I. Regeering geven daar geen bevestiging van. Het is erg slecht om de beweging, die op rechtvaardigheid en billijkheid is gebaseerd, belemmeringen in den weg te leggen. Dat de beschaafde wereld erkent, dat de vrijheidsbeweging er eene is, die gebaseerd is op het menschelijk gevoel, in verband waarmede haar bestaan door de maatschappij wettelijk erkend moet worden, blijkt wel uit de volgende woorden van den oud-President van Amerika Dr. W. Wilson: "Ieder volk heeft het recht, om zijn eigen lot te bepalen."

Ter weerlegging van de aan het adres der leiders gelanceerde beschuldigingen, wijst het blad er o.m. op, dat de ("Indonesische") beweging geen product is van de leiders; dezen zijn niets anders dan de wegwijzers aan de gevoelens en den geest van het volk, opdat het niet een verkeerden en gevaarlijken weg zal inslaan. Zij speelt openkaart en is geen geheime organisatie. Op de openbare zoowel als op de besloten vergaderingen worden dezelfde onderwerpen besproken, zoodat de Regeering zich erover verheugen moest, dat de beweging open-kaart speelt, waardoor het toezicht op hare handelingen wordt vergemakkelijkt.

Indachtig aan het bestaan van een belangen antithese tusschen "sana" en "sini," verwondert het blad geenszins, dat de blanke pers de Regeering steeds opruit en suggereert, om de beweging te kelen en aan handen en voeten te ketenen, opdat zij zal verdwijnen. Het blad is er niet zeker van, of de rigoureuze maatregelen, welke door de Regeering t.a.v. de volksbeweging zijn genomen – w.o. de toepassing van de rekbare artikelen bis en ter, de uitvaardiging van het vergaderverbod, de in werkingstelling van het passenstelsel, de verschillende huiszoekingen en de arrestatie van ir. Soekarno en H. Moechter Loetfi geweten moeten worden aan de blanke pers dan wel aan de onjuistheid van de geheime rapporten, waarin staat dat de volksbeweging voornemens is een opstand te verwekken. Bewijzen, dat genoemde leiders verzet zullen plegen, zijn er niet. Het blad veronderstelt, dat hunne arrestatie is geschied op grond van "wantrouwen" of op het "vermoeden, dat zij de openbare rust en orde zullen verstoren." Het is zeer benieuwd, welke straf zij zullen krijgen. Het twijfelt aan de juistheid van het door de blanke pers gelanceerde bericht over de a.s. interneering van meergenoemde leiders.

Na het persbericht gereleveerd te hebben over de waarschuwing, welke het P.I.-bestuur te Bandoeng van de Politie kreeg om geen politieke actie meer te voeren, zegt het blad verder, dat door de buitengewone politieke maatregelen de kloof tusschen de Regeering en het volk grooter is geworden, daarbij in herinnering brengend het bericht in de *Pewarta*, als zouden de "niniks en mamaks" in Padang Pandjang er aan medewerken om de volksbeweging uit te roeien. Als antwoord op dit bericht zegt het blad: "Er is toch maar altijd wat in een koloniale maatschappij."

Daarop wijst het blad erop, dat het gestook van de blanke pers en de actie van de Hollandsche extremistische nationalistes de politieke atmosfeer h.t.l. nog meer vertroebelen. Het geeft den raad om elken maatregel tegen de volksbeweging eerst rijpelijk te overwegen, omdat deze beweging er eene is, die in de wereldhistorie wortelt, d.w.z. eene beweging, die een maatschappelijke hervorming nastreeft. Men moet niet denken, dat die strenge en met de ijzeren vuist uitgevoerde regelingen in staat zullen zijn den oplaaierenden volksgeest te doden; integendeel, zij zullen de geestkracht van het volk vergrooten, terwijl zijn geest zal blijven opklaaren. Een Britisch-Indische vrijheidsheldin zeide immers. "Wie is in staat een volk te ketenen, indien zijn geest niet geketend wenscht te worden?"

Indachtig dat:

de beweging voortkomt uit de gevoelens van de massa, die de maatschappij vormt en niet een product is van de leiders,

Het bewegings-bloed door het lichaam stroomt van de tegenwoordige jeugd, die de ziel der beweging zal worden in de toekomst,

Door de wereldhistorie het bewijs niet is geleverd, dat een tegenwerking, hoe heftig die ook is, de beweging verzwakt, is het blad er ten volle van overtuigd, dat de volksbeweging

The editorial of *Medan Ra'jat* describes the spirit of the movement arising from the people's aspiration to be independent from colonial rule. By citing Wilson's declaration, it argues for a nation's right for self-determination. It's important to note that the language used was not particularly extreme, especially compared with other the writing that appeared in the news organs of other parties. Voicing calls for independence was not unusual for a nationalist movement. The article's reference to the "white press" (i.e., the Dutch press) as spreading misinformation and provoking attacks on the indigenous people's movement and its leaders might be troubling. Yet such jabs were not uncommon in the general Indies press. On the whole the article itself did not pose a particularly remarkable or extraordinary threat to the colonial authorities. What appears to have carried more actual weight in bringing about *persbreidel* action against *Medan Ra'jat* is the political context in which this action was issued. It is reasonable to conclude that *Medan Ra'jat* was temporarily shut down because it was the organ of Permi. As described above, the Dutch authorities had long been concerned with the influence of Permi's activities in Sumatra. For more than a month before *persbreidel* action was taken up for consideration, the editor-in-chief of *Medan Ra'jat*, Ilias Yacoub, had been imprisoned due to *persdelict*, suggesting that

niet dood zal gaan, integendeel dat zij zal blijven bestaan en in bloei toenemen, vooral indien zij wordt gebaseerd op de overtuiging.

Wie zalde wonde in het hart van het volk, als gevolg van willekeurige handelingen t.a.v. de beweging en hare leiders, die het met hart en ziel liefheeft, kunnen genezen? Zoolang het nog over leiders beschikt, die den door de beweging te bewandelen weg kent, zoolang zal het niet verdwalen: maar aan wien zal het geweten moeten worden, indien het volk door het gemis dier leiders, omdat die uit zijn midden zijn weggerukt, later het verkeerde pad bewandelt.

Ten slotte zegt het blad:

Wij, mannen van de beweging, moeten juist in dezen tijd den geest en de overtuiging versterken.

Vrees, indolentie, zwakheid, leedwezen, gezucht en gesteun en voorbarigheid moeten wij zoover mogelijk wegwerpen, omdat die alle voor onze beweging een doodelijk gif zijn.

Moed en doorzicht moeten wij niet loslaten, omdat die in den strijd een zeer scherp wapen vormen.

Volk, dat sterk naar de vrijheid verlangt.

Uw idealen zullen zeker verwezenlijkt worden. Ze Uwe actie voort!

the authorities were already waiting for the “right” article at right moment to slap the newspaper with charges of endangering public law and order.

The official Dutch summary of *Medan Ra'jat* revealed the authorities' main concerns. After the communist-led uprising took the colonial government by surprise in 1926 and 1927, conducting close surveillance over “dangerous” nationalist and/or religious organizations became the first priority, with the aim of maintain law and order and neutralizing any potential cause for social unrest. PID and its field officers worked around the clock to monitor the activists and made reports whenever necessary.⁴⁵⁹ *Permi* was among those organizations whose activities and personnel were under constant surveillance by the secret police. Knowing that leaders such as Ilias Yacoub had been removed from effective leadership with their *persdelict* imprisonment in September 1933, it was obvious that the authorities were aiming a further blow to *Permi* and its organ, *Medan Ra'jat*. Executing *persbreidel* was the best possible strategy that authorities had to silence the voice of *Permi*'s membership, and so they took the action in October 1933.

Colonial authorities stopped at nothing to effectively crack down on *Medan Ra'jat*, including tailoring the report that accompanied the *persbreidel* action. The report's “appendix” was a translated and “summarized” Dutch version of the *Medan Ra'jat* article that in actuality reflected upon only parts of the original article. The censor (a member of the Resident's staff) read *Medan Ra'jat*, made marks on the parts which he deemed “dangerous,” wrote some notes in Dutch on the margin of the newspaper so that, one may assume, his assistant would understand why these parts needed special attention, and then prepared a “summarized translation” of problematic articles/passages. The report then intentionally copied and pasted parts of the original article to present a highly distorted version of the article's main argument. In one part,

⁴⁵⁹ Shiraishi, “Policing the Phantom Underground,” pp. 1-46.

the report translated a whole paragraph of the original article in *Medan Ra'jat*, while in other sections supposedly translated paragraphs were actually cobbled together from several sentences that were taken from different paragraphs in the original article. The awkward sounding summary quoted above was the ultimate result of this work.

The Dutch “translation” also intentionally changed the original content of the article in question. For instance, the activities of Permi had been a source of headache for the authorities, hence they suppressed its gatherings by applying Articles 153 *bis* and *ter* of the Penal Code. Whereas the article of *Medan Ra'jat* made fun of exactly these two articles by clearly mentioning the numbers, the translation in the official secret report replaced them with “amended Articles a and b.” Also the last sentence of the summarized translation does not correspond with the last sentence of the original article, which reads “People who believe shall triumph” (*Bangsa jang yakin mestilah menang*); rather, the summary closes with a combination of two sentences from the fourth paragraph from the last. The original two sentences read, “We are activists of the movement. In an atmosphere like now, we need to work to fortify our spirit and conviction” (*Kita, kaoem pergerakan. Dalam saat jang seperti sekarang oedaranja, kita perloe bekerdja membenteng semangat dan kejakinan*).

A series of communications in 1933 and 1934 among the Governor-General, the Prosecutor General, and the Director of Justice reflected the government’s suppressive attitude towards the vernacular press.⁴⁶⁰ Emphasized in this correspondence was the key phrase: “times of stress” (“*tyden van spanning*”). As these three top officials of the Indies state all agreed, in the time of stress it was

⁴⁶⁰ “Schema politiek maatregelen, Persbreidel” in Parket van den Procureur-Generaal (R. Verheyen), December 19, 1933, No. 6929/A.P. Geheim aan den Gouverneur-Generaal, in Mr. 1559x/1933; “Uittreksel uit de Nota der Algemeene Secretarie: Schema politieke maatregelen. Persbreidel,” in Mr. 604x/1934.

incumbent upon the authorities to consider seriously applying *persbreidel* to newspapers and periodicals. The law of *persdelict* applied towards confining “crimes against public order” (“*Misdrijven tegen de openbare orde*”) was not enough to maintain political stability. Instead, so the officials argued, under the prevailing circumstances in the Indies, censorship suitable for “a state of war and siege” (*den staat van oorlog en beleg*) must be applied. Accordingly, a “system of public control over the printing press” (*Regeling van het Overheidstoezicht op de drukpers*) should be installed immediately. Arguing that protecting internal as well as external security of the Indies and protecting public order was essential, the officials argued state control over the press should be a role assigned to the Prosecutor General, not to the Governor-General or the Council of the Indies.⁴⁶¹

It could be said that the period between 1933 and 1934 was the high point of government suppression of indigenous political and religious organizations. It was the time when leading nationalists like Soekarno, Hatta, and Sjahrir were exiled, while political organizations were forced to minimize their activities. *Persbreidel* functioned as part of this mechanism of political suppression. Political leaders and their organizations provided the motivation for the emergence of *persbreidel* in the Indies and were the real target of its application. By issuing *persbreidel* against radical nationalist newspapers in conjunction with the aggressive seizure of political leaders and the harassment of organizations, the colonial authorities successfully contained radical political activism by 1935.

The age of confrontational organized politics was about to end, which appeared to mean the end of radical Indonesian newspapers. The number of Indonesian newspapers charged with *persbreidel* declined from sixteen in 1934 to

⁴⁶¹ “Uittreksel uit de Nota der Algemeene Secretarie: Schema politieke maatregelen. *Persbreidel*,” in Mr. 604x/1934. This proposal was finally realized after the Netherlands was occupied by Nazi Germany in May 1940 as I will discuss in Chapter 10.

three in 1935, one in 1936 and none after 1937. The question of what to do with elements of the press that did not emerge from a formal organizational base, however, remained for the Indies state. This question would challenge the Dutch authorities in the latter half of the 1930s. The means they found to handle this challenge will be examined in Chapter 9.

CHAPTER 8

FANTASIZING STRUGGLE: PARI, ISLAM, POPULAR LITERATURE

“[The office of the journal *Al Munir* (The Illuminative)] was full of newspapers from all over Indonesia, sent in exchange for copies of the *Al Munir* magazine. In that office all the students Thawalib and Dinijjah gathered to read the newspapers, and expand their view of the situation both within the country and abroad. And that office also became a ‘debating club’ both as training for discussing religious problems and for religious proselytizing. In short *Al Munir*’s office was the Dinijjah and Thawalib students’ most influential meeting place, not only in spreading intellectual ideas but also in strengthening friendship, comradeship and unity.” (Mansur Daud Dt. Palimo Kajo)⁴⁶²

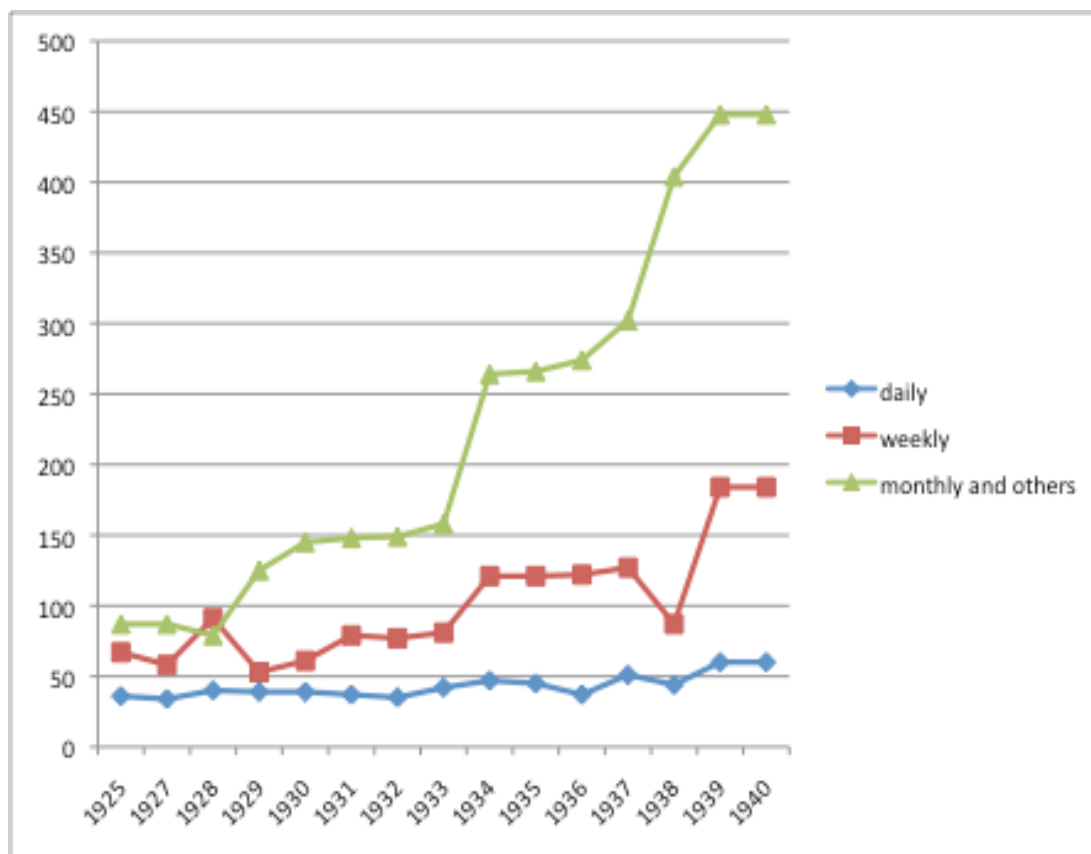
The age of persbreidel in the 1930s was remembered as the decade of political suppression. But intellectuals and journalists did not stop writing; instead in the 1930s the number and variety of Malay periodicals continued to increase. The Indies state restricted mobilizational and organizational politics, but literary, religious, and educational discourses were permitted so long as they were not politicized.

Financially independent publishers and newly developed literary fields contributed to

⁴⁶² Recollection of Mansur Daud Dt. Palimo Kajo in Kahin, *Rebellion to Integration*, pp. 37-38. *Al Munir* was the first modernist Islamic journal started in 1911 in Padang. M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1200* (Third Edition) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 213. Dinijjah and Tawalib were the private systems of modern elementary and secondary school originated and developed in West Sumatra.

this cultural phenomenon. This phenomenon arguably was a product of state censorship, which concentrated too heavily on politics and left out apolitical fields where literary activities thrived. Under the suppressive regime, therefore, Indonesian nationalists managed to continue their struggle for national independence, and to find ways to express themselves in unconventional ways.

[Table 8-1: The Growth of Malay Periodicals, 1925-1940]



[Various sources]

This independent cultural activity emerged in Medan, the East Coast of Sumatra, in the 1930s. The ultimate form was *roman pitjisan* (dime novels), or Medan literature (*sastera Medan*), which started to appear in the late 1930s, as the

scholarship of Indonesian literature has noted.⁴⁶³ This literary genre was among those categorized as “wild literature” (*bacaan liar, kesusasteraan liar*),⁴⁶⁴ which simply means that it was not sanctioned by the colonial authorities. The government had attempted to regulate the print (literary) market with the establishment of Balai Poestaka, a publishing house as well as bureau for popular literature. Modernist Muslim writers, who were nationalistically oriented and nonetheless had connections with Balai Poestaka were the creators of “unruly” literature in Medan.

Medan literature consisted of literary works and journalistic writings. The Medan literary circle was well aware of the success and influence of the Chinese-Malay literature, which had flourished in the Indies, particularly on Java, since the 1900s. This literature attracted a wide range of readers who were not only Chinese, but also Indonesian and European. Although the contents of the Chinese-Malay literature became more varied towards the end of colonial period,⁴⁶⁵ Medan literati shared the view of Balai Poestaka that the Chinese-Malay literature was too focused on *peranakan*.⁴⁶⁶ Unlike the Chinese-Malay publications, however, Medan’s dime novels or *roman pitjisan* comprised a cultural project characterized by nationalistic elements. This project aimed at promoting the spoken form of the national language Indonesian, which distinguished itself from the bookish form of “recognized” writers and Balai Poestaka. It also carried Islamic messages as it aimed to provide the cultural and religious basis for the future Indonesian state.

⁴⁶³ Roolvink 1950; A. Teeuw, *Pokok dan Tokoh dalam Kesusasteraan Indonesia Baru, I* (Jakarta: Pembangunan, 1955); Bakri Siregar, *Sedjarah Sastra Indonesia Modern* (Jakarta: Akademi Sastra dan Bahasa “Multatuli,” 1964), pp. 123-124.

⁴⁶⁴ Teeuw, *Pokok dan Tokoh dalam Kesusasteraan Indonesia Baru*, pp. 67-70; G. W. J. Drewes, “Oud en nieuw in de hedendaagse Indonesische litteratuur,” *De Gids*, 96 (1932), p. 330.

⁴⁶⁵ For instance, since the 1920s, works by the prominent *peranakan* writer Njoo Cheong Seng changed in terms of their contents and characters. See Chandra, “Fantasizing Chinese/Indonesian Hero.”

⁴⁶⁶ “Dari hal literatuur Melaju [Pemandangannya tuan Later, Hoofd dari Volklectuur (sic.)],” *ABAD XX*, Thn. 3, No. 1 (January 6, 1934), pp. 5-7.

These political implications represented a unique combination of elements for *roman pitjisan* as a cultural project – leftist politics, Islamic modernism, and aesthetic entertainment. Questions emerge however: Why did this particular cultural project materialize in Medan? Why and how did it develop in the 1930s? In order to answer these questions, this chapter examines the characteristics of Medan, the circle of writers who gave rise to *roman pitjisan*, and the issues that they tried to engage in their literary works.

Medan: Socio-Economic Characteristics

Medan developed in tandem with the proliferation of plantations on the East Coast of Sumatra from the late nineteenth century onward. It was an unconventional colonial city, because it did not have an extended historical background compared to other colonial cities in Java such as Batavia, Jogjakarta, Semarang, and Soerabaja, which all had either deep local historical roots or a colonial history dating to the seventeenth century. By the mid-1920s Medan had become the most urban settlement in Sumatra. In 1921 it was described as follows: “This city has a very special character; it appears neither European nor typically Indies-like. Its orderly layout was kept from the beginning according to a plan, and its neatness distinguishes this city favorably from most other bigger places in the Indies.”⁴⁶⁷

The island of Sumatra was rich in natural resources, which provided the basis for a plantation economy that was directly connected to the world market since the late nineteenth century. The East Coast of Sumatra was not exceptional; much like other areas of Sumatra, key forces behind its development in the colonial era were the presences of agricultural estates and the availability of migrant workers.⁴⁶⁸ The

⁴⁶⁷ *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 2 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1921), p. 691.

⁴⁶⁸ About colonial Deli through Dutch eyes, Lily E. Clerkx and Wim F. Wertheim (ed.), *Living in Deli: Its Society as Imagined in Colonial Fiction* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1991).

Sumatran East Coast experienced the tobacco boom era from 1870 to 1890. In the ten years from 1873 to 1883, tobacco production increased ten-fold, from 9,238 to 93,532 bales.⁴⁶⁹ In 1890 when tobacco was oversupplied in the world market and the United States imposed high import tariffs on imported tobacco, the profit, production, and investment of tobacco in the Sumatran East Coast sharply decreased. In the 1890s many planters in the Indies began to look for alternative plantation crops, especially rubber.⁴⁷⁰

Table 8-2: Population of the East Coast of Sumatra

	Europeans	Indonesians	Chinese & other Asians	Total	Density per square km.
1900	2,079	306,035	112,976	421,090	
1905	2,667	450,941	114,809	568,417	
1917	6,270	742,215	145,655	894,140	9.56
1920	7,882	1,042,930	146,742	1,197,554	
1927	8,263	1,077,830	141,724	1,227,817	
1930	11,079	1,470,395	211,726	1,693,200	17.9
% increase 1900-1930	433	380	87	302	

[Source: Michael van Langenberg, "National Revolution in North Sumatra, Sumatra Timur and Tapanuli, 1942-1950," p. 959.]

The increase in population on the Sumatran East Coast reflected the economic boom. In 1900 the total population was 421,090. By 1920 it had increased to 1,197,554 in 1920 and by 1930 to 1,693,200. Thus in thirty years the population grew more than four times. The "native" population, which grew from 306,035 in 1900 to

⁴⁶⁹ Michael van Langenberg, "National Revolution in North Sumatra, Sumatra Timur and Tapanuli, 1942-1950," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Sidney, 1976), p. 95.

⁴⁷⁰ Thee Kian Wee, "Plantation, Agriculture and Export Growth: An Economic History of East Sumatra, 1863-1942," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin), 1969, pp. 15-24.

1,470,395 in 1930, accounted for most of the region's population gain.⁴⁷¹ Indigenous residents represented more than eighty-six percent of the population.

Table 8-3: Indonesian Population According to Ethnic Group 1930

	East Coast of Sumatra		Tapanuli	
	Total	%	Total	%
Malays	334,870	23	16,834	1.62
Karonese	145,429	9.98	8,921	0.86
Simalungun	95,144	6.53	-	-
Javanese	589,836	40.51	13,301	1.28
Pakpak/Dairi	-	-	19,936	1.92
Toba	74,224	5.09	523,524	50.63
Angkola	6,706	0.46	79,849	7.72
Padang Lawas	-	-	65,414	6.32
Mandailing	45,308	3.11	89,475	8.65
Nias	-	-	194,939	18.83
Minangkabau	50,677	3.48	9,868	0.95
Sundanese	44,107	3.02	3,290	0.31
Betawi	8,882	0.61	-	-
Banjarese	31,266	2.14	-	-
Others	29,408	2.01	8,552	0.82

[Source: Michael van Langenberg, "National Revolution in North Sumatra, Sumatra Timur and Tapanuli," p. 960.]

The exceptional development of the Sumatran East Coast as a plantation region also resulted in the diversification of population. The region was under-populated and under-developed until the late nineteenth century. In order to develop the region and operate the plantations, migrant workers were brought in from other regions. Large numbers of Javanese came as indentured laborers to work in plantations. As a result, in 1930 the Javanese had become the largest ethnic group in eastern Sumatra,

⁴⁷¹ van Langenberg, "National Revolution in North Sumatra, Sumatra Timur and Tapanuli," p. 959.

representing 40.51 percent of the local population. They were followed by Malays with 23.00 percent. The distinctive nature of this profile stands out when it is compared with Tapanuli, a neighboring region on the East Coast. More than half of the population in Tapanuli included the Toba people, indigenous to the region, while Javanese made up only 1.28 percent of the local population.⁴⁷²

The plantation economy in the Sumatran East Coast produced a highly stratified class structure. At the top were the European planters, businessmen, and government officials. Below them were the indigenous aristocracy (*sultan*, *radja*, *tengku*, *datoek*, and *orang kaya*), Western-educated professionals (doctors, lawyers, senior civil servants, etc.), and the wealthier members of the Chinese and Indian merchant communities. A huge socio-economic gap separated this establishment from the mass population at the bottom of the pyramid.

Table 8-4: Population of Medan, 1920-1930				
	Indonesians	Chinese & Other Asians	Europeans	Totals
1915	17,000	14,000*	2,000	36,000
1920	23,823	18,297	3,128	45,248
1927	23,332	20,072	3,516	46,920
1930	41,270	31,021	4,293	76,584
Increase 1920-30	73.20%	69.50%	37.20%	69.30%
[Source: Parada Harahap, <i>Dari Pantai ke pandai</i> , 1926, p. 215 for the rough data of 1915; Michael van Langenberg, "National Revolution in North Sumatra, Sumatra Timur and Tapanuli," p. 963.]				
* This number only refers to the Chinese population.				

But unlike the rest of the East Coast, Medan had an even more distinctive composition of population. Here the balance between Indonesian and Chinese was much more even than in other cities, towns, and villages in the region. The population growth rate was also impressive; during the 1920s it recorded 69.3 percent. Both

⁴⁷² The data is taken from van Langenberg, "National Revolution in North Sumatra, Sumatra Timur and Tapanuli," p. 960.

Indonesians and the Chinese represented the majority of the Medan population; during the 1920s the number of Indonesians in the city increased 73.2 percent, while the population of Chinese (and other Asians) increased by 69.5 percent. In 1915, Indonesians were about 17,000 residents, which was 47.22 percent of the population, while the Chinese were 14,000, which was 38.88 percent. Fifteen years later, in 1930 Indonesians made up 53.8 percent of the city's population, while the Chinese were 40.5 percent.

Once called “Paris of the Indies” (*Parijs Hindia*),⁴⁷³ as an urban center in a vast hinterland, Medan epitomized the conflicting faces of the Indies colony. It was the city of giant agribusiness. As the largest city in Sumatra, Medan was a symbol of the elite establishment, while the hinterland was composed of largely traditional indigenous societies and huge plantations. Differing contemporary accounts of Medan and the wider Deli region of the time highlight these contrasts. In his travel account of the early 1920s, the famous Dutch novelist Louis Couperus wrote of Medan as “a white town in the midst of green trees and beautifully-kept green lawns.” His account portrays the city as a modern metropolis in an exotic colony, a dream-like place for Dutch people.

Medan is a new town, with cool white buildings, situated in the midst of cool, green fields. [...] It is modern and European; there is a touch of England about it, and there is no doubt that the proximity of Singapore has had an influence upon Medan. The “White Club,” the Post Office, the Town Hall, and the Java Bank, Hotel de Boer and Medan hotel, the imposing offices of various companies: Harrison and Crossfield, Deli Maatschappij, Deli

⁴⁷³ Parada Harahap, *Dari Pantai Kepantai: Perdjalananan Ke-Soematra, October-Dec. 1925 dan Maart-April 1926* (Weltevreden: Uitgevers Maatschappij Bintang Hindia, 1926), p. 213.

Proefstation, Deli Railway Company, the firm of Van Nie and Co., they all lie there amongst the extraordinary fresh green of the rain-washed palm, fig-trees, and tjemaras; great white buildings, breathing prosperity, and telling of profitable work, and of admirable Western effort.”⁴⁷⁴

By contrast, in the eyes of the popular communist leader Tan Malaka, Medan’s opulence presented a stark contrast with the reality found on Deli plantations. Between December 1919 and June 1921, Tan Malaka had stayed in the region of Deli, for which Medan was the capital city. There he took a job teaching the children of contract coolies in a Swiss- and German-owned tobacco plantation. In his autobiography, he wrote of the existence of class conflict and violent situations there.

A land of gold, a haven for the capitalist class, but a land of sweat, tears, death. [...] There the sharp conflict between capital and labor, between colonizer and colonized, was played out. The natural wealth of Deli gave rise to the most wealthy, cruel, arrogant, and conservative colonizing capitalist class as well as that most oppressed, exploited, and humiliated class, the Indonesian contract coolie. [...]

Deli was a region of the modern Indonesian nation, and a region of the true proletariat also. [...]

The conflict between the white, stupid, arrogant, cruel colonizers and the colored nation of driven, cheated, oppressed, and exploited slaves – a conflict which found a few Indonesians as skilled labour caught in the middle – fouled the atmosphere in Deli and gave rise to constant attacks by the coolies on the Dutch plantation. Frequently just one insult or criticism was enough to cause

⁴⁷⁴ Couperus, *Eastward*, pp. 52-53.

a coolie to draw his machete from his belt and attack the *Tuan Besar* [Big Master] or *Tuan Kecil* [Little Master] then and there, for his heart was filled with such a hatred for it all.⁴⁷⁵

While Couperus was a traveler, Tan Malaka started his political career in the East Coast of Sumatra. He started working with the Indies Social Democratic Association (ISDV) and irregularly contributed articles for its news organ, *Soeara Rakjat* (People's Voice). He also worked as a labor union activist and was involved in the 1920 strike of railroad workers. Needless to say, Tan Malaka's Medan projected a frontier of class struggle.

Political, religious and education activists were disturbed to observe the extreme suffering caused by the colonial plantation system in the region, and the socio-economic disparity it fostered fueled the rise of wider anti-colonial sentiments among the people. Replete with legal issues and disputes, Medan also attracted indigenous professionals such as lawyers and especially journalists from outside the East Coast.

Medan as Publishing Center

Medan in the 1920s not only was the capital of the East Coast of Sumatra, but also emerged as the center of Sumatran print culture, a position that Padang of West Sumatra had enjoyed since the nineteenth century. In terms of Malay print culture, unlike in Java where private *peranakan* publishers overwhelmingly out-published Balai Poestaka, in Sumatra indigenous publishers dominated the field. This had much to do with the penetration and spread of Islamic modernism that had taken place

⁴⁷⁵ Tan Malaka, *From Jail to Jail*, Volume One, (translated by Helen Jarvis), (Athens: Southeast Asia Series, Number 83, Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1991), pp. 43, 44, and 47.

through Islamic schools since the nineteenth century. West Sumatra was the epicenter of the Islamic modernist movement, and for a long time the City of Padang in particular functioned as the publishing as well as administrative and commercial center of the island. Accordingly, during the colonial period the Minangkabau people were said to have made up more than forty percent of the publishing businesses in Sumatra.⁴⁷⁶ From the beginning of the twentieth century, private publishers such as Pewarta, Timoer, Agam Limbago Minangkabau and De Volharding published periodicals, school textbooks, and Islamic reading materials.⁴⁷⁷

In contrast to Padang's role as the traditional publishing center in Sumatra, until the end of the nineteenth century Medan relied on the British Strait Settlements both economically and politically. Even information about the Sumatran East Coast came to Batavia by way of the British colony. This situation changed after the newspaper *Deli Courant* began circulation on March 18, 1885. It was not until 1910 that the region's first Malay newspaper, *Pewarta Deli* (Deli Herald), circulated in Medan, as Chapter 2 has described. Sumatra's influential journalist of the time, Dja Endar Moeda started *Pewarta Deli* in the capacity of chief editor, and Sjarikat Tapanoeli was its publisher. Later on other prominent journalists such as Soetan Parlindoengan, Mangaradja Ihotan, Kanoen, and Adi Negoro assumed his position as successors. Most newspapers in Medan throughout the 1910s and the 1920s carried economic and commercial articles and advertisements. Because of these features, even though the two leading newspapers, *Pewarta Deli* and the Chinese-owned *Andalas*,⁴⁷⁸ were rivals since the 1920s, for the most part they could stay away from local ethnic politics. Few newspapers were associated with political organizations. In

⁴⁷⁶ A. A. Navis, "Tjerita Rakjat Minangkabau," *Budaya*, No. 4 (1955),

⁴⁷⁷ Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness*, pp. 125-158.

⁴⁷⁸ *Andalas* was published by Sumatrasche Handelsdrukkerij with T. B. Choo as the first editor. In 1924 *Andalas* changed its name to *Pelita Andalas*, and continued until 1942.

fact, the three major newspapers, *Pewarta Deli*, *Sinar Deli* (Gleam of Deli)⁴⁷⁹ and *Pelita Andalas* (Andalas Lantern, formerly *Andalas*), competed with each other for readership and advertisements, covering mainly economic issues and few political events.⁴⁸⁰ As essentially non-partisan newspapers, none of these papers were ever charged with persbreidel, which was instituted in 1931. These facts helped Medan keep a low profile while the Indies state focused its press-curbing efforts primarily on Batavia and West Sumatra throughout the 1930s.

Financial sources also shaped the development of print culture. To finance publishing business, the National Bank (*Bank Nasional*), established in 1930 by Anwar St. Saidi, a Minangkabau entrepreneur originating from Bukittinggi, played a crucial role in Medan. Anwar St. Saidi's elder brother Djamaluddin Ibrahim was one of the former teachers at the Thawalib schools, where Islamic modernism and anti-colonial ideas were taught, and by 1930 was a leading member of Tan Malaka's *Pari* (*Partai Republik Indonesia*, Republic of Indonesia Party), a communist underground party. Because of his brother's influence, Anwar became politically consciousness as he grew up. When Dr. Soetomo, the famous pioneer of the nationalist movement, established the first "Indonesian" (as opposed to foreign capitalized) bank in Soerabaja, Anwar was eager to found its branch in West Sumatra. After the *Bank Nasional Indonesia* (National Bank of Indonesia) in Soerabaja refused his proposal, Anwar established his own bank, which was first called *Abuan Saudagar* (Merchants Savings Bank) and later changed to *Bank Nasional*. This bank became a major financial institution supporting indigenous traders in the region, and most importantly

⁴⁷⁹ Daily *Sinar Deli* started its publication in 1930 by Mij Sinar Deli with Mangaradja Ihoetan as the first editor, and continued until 1942.

⁴⁸⁰ In the middle of the 1920s there were three Indonesian – *Pewarta Deli*, *Benih Timoer*, and *Pantjaran Berita* – and two Chinese-Malay newspapers – *Pelita Andalas* and *Tjin Po*. Parada Harahap had impression that for the city of population of 36,000, five Malay newspapers were too many. Harahap, *Dari Pantai kepantai*, pp. 219-220. The size of the population that Harahap described appeared too small, unless it referred to the population in the core part of the city.

funding religious and educational organizations as well as publishing business. Against such political, religious, and financial backdrop of Minangkabau, Medan emerged a new publishing center in Sumatra in the 1930s.

Political Immigrants

The 1920s saw the emergence of radical political and social movements in the East Coast. As an historian Lance Castles identifies, these movements can be classified into three categories: political movements seeking independence from the Netherlands, religious movements to purify Islamic practice of deviations from the original teachings of Mohammed, and social movements by the young generation who resented their low status under *adat* (customs) and were against the traditional authority, the elders, and the social restraints they represented.⁴⁸¹ The first and second segments of these activisms were fostered by the political migrants to Medan, while the third was rooted in the local traditional power structure.

The first kind of activism was set in motion upon the arrival of Iwa Koesoema Soemantri in February 1928. He launched a new age of politics, that is, the age of movement in Sumatra. Born on May 31, 1899 in Tjiamis, West Java, he studied at HIS, the Dutch high school for natives, the Training School for Civil Servants (OSVIA) Bandoeng, and the Law College (*Rechtshogeschool*) in Batavia. After having worked for the Indies government as lawyer about a year, he went to the Netherlands and studied law at the University of Leiden from 1922 to 1925. He was active in the Indonesian Students' Association (*Perhimpunan Indonesia*, PI) and was elected its chairman in 1923. Other notable students involved with this organization included Mohammad Hatta, who later played a significant role in the Indonesian

⁴⁸¹ Lance Castles, "The Political Life of a Sumatran Residency: Tapanuli 1915-1940," (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1972), pp. 227-228.

nationalist movement. The students became radicalized as they followed the news from Indonesia on the movement led by Semaoen in 1922-1923, and the association also became close with the Comintern. After graduating from the law school in Leiden, Iwa spent one and half years in Moscow, from October 1925 until the middle of 1927. He then went back to Indonesia in late 1927 and became friends with Soekarno in Bandoeng. Several months later, he moved to Medan as a lawyer and became involved in politics there. He began the politically oriented newspaper *Matahari Indonesia* (Indonesian Sun) in 1928 in Medan, and led the Medan branch of Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI), which Soekarno established in July 1927. He was able to bring together the party's nationalistic propaganda and the major local political issues of the day, such as labor disputes and exploitation at the plantations. He was successful in organizing unions among Indonesian workers and tried to reach out and organize coolie labor in the plantations. Not surprisingly, his activities came under tight surveillance and were finally suspended after a year and a half, when he was arrested in the middle of 1930 and exiled to Banda.⁴⁸²

Upon Iwa's departure, the youths who were influenced by him directly or indirectly took over the nationalist movement in Medan. These figures included Djauhari Salim (West Sumatra), Abdul Hamid Lubis (Southern Batak), Sutan Nur Alamsjah (West Sumatra) and Mohamad Djoni (Southern Tapanoeli).⁴⁸³ While none of these young activists had been born in the East Coast, many were to some extent connected with journalism in Medan. These outsiders would draw attention to national-level matters, while activists with local roots would focus on local issues. Four nationalist leaders active in Sumatra's East Coast region focused much of their

⁴⁸² Iwa Koesoema Soemanteri, *Indonesia Minzokushugi no Genryu: Iwa Koesoema Soemanteri Jiden* (translated by Kenichi Goto) (Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 1975), pp 1-74.

⁴⁸³ For four nationalist leaders, I rely on William O'Malley, "Indonesia in the Great Depression: A Study of East Sumatra and Jogjakarta in the 1930's," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1977), pp. 224-304.

activity on working with groups that had connections to national-level political organizing. Salim led PNI by working as editor-in-chief of the daily *Oetoesan Sumatra* (Sumatran Envoy), which was a semi-official news organ of the Medan branch PNI, but was discontinued in September 1932.⁴⁸⁴ Lubis was a regular contributor to *Pewartu Deli*, and in 1933 became secretary of the Indonesian Party (*Partai Indonesia, Partindo*) in the East Coast and the chief editor of its news organ, *Pelita Andalas*. He was deemed a potential threat to public order and exiled to Boven Digoel in 1934. Alamsjah was a younger brother of Sutan Sjahrir – the founder of Indonesian National Education Party (*PNI-Baru*). He became chairman of the party's Medan branch when it was set up in 1932, and later in 1936 became a member of Dr. Soetomo's Great Indonesia Party (*Parindra*) in Medan. Djoni was active in Partindo after its establishment in January 1932. This secular nationalistic activism, however, did not successfully mobilize the mass, but was made public through newspaper reports. For it, *Pewartu Deli* and *Sinar Deli* played a significant role in making those activists familiar to the public. Both papers were not affiliated with any political parties, but carried reports on politics in the region as well as in the Indies. Although both newspapers took a non-partisan stance, they were relatively pro-nationalist.

Secular radicalism was gradually taken over by the religious movement, which migrated from West Sumatra in the aftermath of the communist uprising of 1927. A major part of the Muslim intellectuals consisted of those from the Sumatra Thawalib schools, which had an extensive network of modernist schools offering both religious and secular education in Sumatra.

In the 1920s, Minangkabau religious/political leaders had become more outspoken in their criticisms of Dutch rule and openly advocated an independent Indonesia. They also aligned themselves with Tan Malaka, who had campaigned

⁴⁸⁴ O'Malley, "Indonesia in the Great Depression," p. 287, f.n. 13.

against the rebellion prior to the uprising, but was only able to reach his comrades in Padang Pandjang in time. As a result, by the time the communist rebellions broke out, while many communist leaders were caught in other regions, few of the prominent anti-Dutch leaders in West Sumatra, particularly from Padang Pandjang, remained free and active. In the case of West Sumatra, government reports increasingly raised the alarm about potential threats to social stability by drawing parallels between the attitudes of religious political organizations in the early 1930s with those of the communists prior to the 1927 rebellions. With this heavy government surveillance, the religiously motivated radical political activism in the 1930s was also destined to be crushed. Luckily, because of its favorable socio-economic conditions, Medan attracted many of those leaders fleeing the colonial government crackdown in other parts of the island. Still, even though many Minangkabau political and religious leaders had fled to the city, neither Permi nor PSSI developed into a major political party. Instead, they took the form of religious and educational organizations and among others made use of Moehammadijah for their activities, this latter organization being favored because of its moderate modernist Islamic stance. While during the 1910s and 1920s Moehammadijah had not succeeded in penetrating Sumatra because of its still Java-centric nature, in the 1930s West Sumatrans took up the organization's leadership in Medan. Because political organizations had come under tight police surveillance in West Sumatra and other places in the Indies, the Minangkabau religious and political leaders did not want to take the same risk in Medan. Instead, they kept a low profile and concentrated on religious, educational, and journalistic activities.

Political immigrants had brought a breath of fresh air to the nationalist politics in Medan of the late 1920s and early 1930s. The question then became for them, how to sustain and promote this activist politics in the real life, because organizational

politics would inevitably confront the repressive colonial state. The tool that these intellectual migrants turned to was the literary form, which had been left relatively outside of the political arena and beyond censorship scrutiny in the 1930s.

Adi Negoro: New Journalism and Muhammad Yamin

In late 1931, Adi Negoro or Djamaloeddin gelar Datuk Maradjo Sutan came to Medan to take the position of editor at the popular daily *Pewartu Deli*.⁴⁸⁵ Being trained in journalism in Germany, he had “modern” ideas on how to run a newspaper, and his editorship changed *Pewartu Deli* into a more politically conscious as well as entertaining newspaper.

Born on August 14, 1904 in Talawi, Sawahlunto, West Sumatra, Adi Negoro studied at the European Primary School (*Europeesche Lagere School*, ELS) and the MULO. In 1918 he moved to Batavia and entered the STOVIA. As a student, at the age of eighteen, Adi Negoro began his career as journalist by contributing articles to the journal *Tjaja Hindia*, published by Landjumin Datuk Tumenggung who also published the daily *Neratja*. While studying medicine, he became more interested in politics and social affairs, which drove him to change his career to journalism.

In 1926 Adi Negoro went to Germany and studied journalism in Berlin, Munich, and Wuerzburg. From Germany, he regularly contributed articles to Balai Poestaka’s journal *Pandji Poestaka* as well as to *Bintang Timoer* (Batavia, Parada Harahap was the editor-in-chief) and *Pewartu Deli* (Medan). During his study, he also wrote three books in Malay – *Darah Moedah* (Young Blood, 1927), *Asmara Djaja* (Victorious Love, 1928), and *Melawat ke Barat* (Pilgrimage to the West, 3 volumes, 1930-1932). All three were published by Balai Poestaka. Among them, Balai

⁴⁸⁵ The description below is based on Soebagijo I. N., *Adinegoro: Pelopor Jurnalistik Indonesia* (Jakarta: CV Haji Masagung, 1987).

Poestaka seemed to find *Asmara Djaja* favorable enough to publish it in Sundanese and Javanese in 1930 and 1932, respectively.⁴⁸⁶ Balai Poestaka chose *Asmara Djaja* to be circulated in two vernaculars. It is likely that Balai Poestaka found this novel an acceptable piece because it was critical not only of the old tradition, but also of the young generation who criticized tradition without offering any clear vision. Together with C. Spat, lecturer and grammarian of Malay, Adi Negoro also published a Malay pocket dictionary *Kamoes Kemadjoean* <*Modern Zakwoordenboek*> (Dictionary of Progress <Modern Pocket dictionary>) in the Netherlands in 1928.⁴⁸⁷

When Adi Negoro returned to the Indies in 1930, he was hired as chief editor of Balai Poestaka's *Pandji Poestaka*, but he left the position after six months for reasons that were unclear. In early 1931 he decided to move to Medan to take the position of editor-in-chief of *Pewartu Deli*. His editorship opened a new era of print culture in Medan. Just after taking the job at *Pewartu Deli*, he also started to edit and publish a monthly popular journal, *Abad ke-XX* (20th Century), which continued as *Abad XX* from 1932 on.

It was Adi Negoro's mission to develop the Malay press in the Indies. In 1928 while studying journalism in Germany, he contributed a series of articles entitled "*Pemandangan dari djaoeh*" (View from a Distance) to *Pewartu Deli*. In one of these articles, "*Pemandangan dari djaoeh: Pers zaman sekarang*" (View from Afar: The Press Today), he maintained that the Malay language was the door to modernity, because if one could read Malay, one could reach the outside world. It was "the age of radio, electricity and steam," he exclaimed, and one "can witness the nature of this

⁴⁸⁶ The Sundanese version was *Asmara Djaja Karangan Adi Negoro* (translated by M. E. Nata Soekardja, Weltvreden: Balai Poestaka, 1930), while the Javanese one was *Asmara Djaja* (translated by Soewignja, Batavia-Centrum: Bale Poestaka, 1932).

⁴⁸⁷ C. Spat en Adi Negoro, *Kamoes Kemadjoean* <*Modern Zakwoordenboek*> (Goude: van Goor, 1928).

rapidly changing time in the Malay language.”⁴⁸⁸ The Malay press was a relatively new product, he argued, but it was the only solid and reliable way to transmit ideas and messages to the emerging audience in Indonesia; in places where there were “no postal system, telegraph, telephone and radio,” the tool to reach a wider audience was to be found in “only printing machines.” Assuming everyone across Indonesia could read Malay, the press would be able to reach them and promote positive change among them. It appears that Adi Negoro had clear ideas on the potential of the Malay language as a medium for educating Indonesians through print culture. His remarks came just before the 1928 Youth Pledge that cemented Indonesia’s national language.

Adi Negoro’s editorship introduced and developed two new fields – politics and entertainment – in the world of print culture in Medan. On the surface, Adi Negoro was not politically active because he did not associate with any political parties. But it was obvious from his writings and editorial style that his political orientation was nationalistic. When he was in Germany he had become acquainted with European liberal thought,⁴⁸⁹ and wrote sympathetic essays in support of Semaoen and Darsono, who were both Indonesian communists exiled in Europe at that time. In one of the articles he contended that Indonesians needed to publish brochures in the Malay language on the two distinguished communists just as Europeans did for their activists.⁴⁹⁰

There is another factor that cannot be dismissed with regard to Adi Negoro’s political orientation, which was the influence of his elder brother and the communications between them. The elder brother was Muhammad Yamin, who was

⁴⁸⁸ Adi Negoro, “Pemandangan dari djaoeh: Pers zaman sekarang,” *Pewarta Deli*, October 5-6, 1928.

⁴⁸⁹ His contributions to *Pewarta Deli* during his European days were theoretical and abstract, which reflected his theoretical and philosophical readings.

⁴⁹⁰ Adi Negoro, “Pers kita dan negeri asing,” *Pewarta Deli*, October 22, 1928.

remembered by Indonesians as a poet, playwright, historian, as well as politician.⁴⁹¹ Yamin was born a year before Adi Negoro, on August 24, 1903, in Sawah Lunto, West Sumatra. He studied at the HIS in Palembang, South Sumatra. Then he went to Buitenzorg, West Java, to take courses on farming and husbandry. In 1925 he enrolled at the General Middle School (*Algemene Middelbare School*, AMS) in Jogjakarta, majoring in history and Far Eastern languages, including Malay, Javanese, and Sanskrit. Upon graduation in 1927 he was preparing for his departure to study language and history at Leiden University in the Netherlands when his father's death forced him to call off the plan. Instead, he began to study law at the School of Law (*Rechtshogeschool*) in Batavia, where he earned his law degree in 1932. As early as in 1920, Yamin had started to write in Malay for the Dutch-language journal *Jong Sumatra* (Young Sumatrans), which was the organ for the Association for Young Sumatrans (*Jong Sumatranen Bond*, JSB). While up until the early 1920s his political affinity was oriented to Sumatra, rather than Indonesia, as his 1922 poem *Tanah Air* (Native Soil) shows, over the course of several years it shifted to Indonesia, as his 1928 poem *Indonésia toempah darahkoe!* (Indonesia my homeland) demonstrates.⁴⁹²

His political life started as an active member of the Association of Young Sumatrans in Padang, where he made friends with political activists Mohammad Hatta (later to become Indonesia's first Vice President) and Amir Sjarifoeddin (to become Indonesia's second Prime Minister). In the 1923 celebration of the fifth anniversary of Young Sumatrans, Yamin delivered a speech "*De maleisch taal in het verleden, heden*

⁴⁹¹ Sutrisno Kutoyo, *Prof. Mohammad Yamin S.H., pahlawan nasional* (Jakarta: Proyek Biografi Pahlawan Nasional, Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1975); Mardanas (et al.), *Biografi Pahlawan Nasional* (Djakarta: Lembaga Sedjarah dan Antropologi, 1972); T. B. Simatupang, *Report from Banaran: Experiences during the People's War* (translated by Benedict Anderson) (London: Equinox Publishing, 2009), p. 252.

⁴⁹² Muhammad Yamin, *Indonésia toempah darahkoe!* (Weltvereden: Kenaga, 1928). In the same year, he translated the collection of essays by Rabindranath Tagore, the famous Bengali literary figure. Rabindranath Tagore and Muhammad Yamin, *Menantikan soerat dari radja: Karangan Rabindranath Tagore* (Weltevreden: Balai Poestaka, 1928).

en toekomst” (Malay Language: Past, Present and Future) – ironically in Dutch. He advocated a non-cooperative stance by Partindo against Dutch colonialism. In 1928 he participated in the historic Second Congress of Indonesian Youth, and played a major role in drafting “*Soempah Pemoeda*,” the Youth Pledge produced by the Congress. It was a declaration made on October 28, 1928, proclaiming allegiance to three ideas – one motherland, one nation, and one language. This congress was put together by various youth organizations: Association of Young Javanese (*Jong Java*), Association of Young Sumatrans, Association of Islamic Youth (*Jong Islamieten Bond*), Association of Young Batak (*Jong Batak*), Association of Young Minahasans (*Jong Minahasa*), Association of Celebes Youth (*Jong Celebes*), Association of Young Ambonese (*Jong Ambon*), Batavian Youth (*Pemoeda Kaum Betawi*), Association of Indonesian Students (*Perhimpunan Pelajar Pelajar Indonesia*, PPPI), and the likes. Through the organization of Young Indonesians (*Indonesia Moeda*), he became an active proponent of making Malay the national and unifying language.

In 1932 Yamin joined Partindo, which was a secular nationalist party founded by Soekarno. In the same year upon graduation from law school, he was elected to the People’s Council (*Volksraad*). It served as a forum for the non-European residents of the Indies to express their aspirations, but in fact lacked the power to pursue reforms, because the Governor-General held the power of veto on all acts of the Council. After Partindo was disbanded in November 1936, Yamin formed the Indonesian People’s Movement (*Gerakan Rakyat Indonesia*, *Gerindo*) in May 1937 with A. K. Gani (1905-1958) and Amir Sjarifoeddin (1907-1948). Gerindo’s aim was to raise public consciousness of nationalist ideas through mass organizations. The background of Gerindo’s founding was a growing willingness on the part of many left-wing nationalists to cooperate with the Dutch. This trend corresponded with the rise of the Popular Front in the early 1930s, a time when the Comintern under Joseph Stalin’s

leadership adopted a policy of forming broad alliances with almost any political party willing to oppose the fascists. The willingness of Indonesian activist organizations to fall in with this trend arose both from despair over the prospects for effective nationalist resistance in the face of Dutch military and police power, and also from a conviction that collaboration against fascism, in particular Japanese fascism, had become the government's highest priority. Gerindo had hoped that through its cooperation, the Dutch could be swayed towards greater willingness to establish a separate legislature in the colonial territory. Shortly before Japan took over Java, Amir Sjariffoedin received funds from the Dutch authorities to organize underground resistance against the Japanese.

Meanwhile, Tan Malaka was known as the legendary hero mainly among his fellow Minangkabaus, like Yamin. Around the time when Indonesia declared independence in 1945, the extent of Yamin's association with Tan Malaka became evident as he published two small books on the legendary political fugitive. One was written with Sakti Arga entitled *Tan Malaka datang!* (Tan Malaka has Come!) in 1945,⁴⁹³ and the other is *Tan Malaka: Bapak Republik Indonesia* (Tan Malaka: Father of the Republic of Indonesia) in 1946.⁴⁹⁴ Later, Yamin joined Tan Malaka's *Murba* Party (*Partai Murba*, the national-communist party) and edited its daily *Mimbar Indonesia* (Indonesia's Pulpit).

Mohammad Yamin is remembered as a powerful politician in Indonesian history, while his younger brother Adi Negoro kept a low profile on the national scene. From the point of view of organizational politics, Adi Negoro appeared inactive, but in fact he took a leadership role in setting up unconventional literary

⁴⁹³ Sakti Arga, Muhammad Yamin, *Tan Malaka datang!* (Bt. Tinggi: Tjerdas, 1945).

⁴⁹⁴ *Tan Malaka: Bapak Republik Indonesia* (Djawa Timur: Moerba Berdjoeang, 1946); *Tan Malacca, Bapak Republik Indonesia: Riwayat-politik seorang pengandjoer revolusionér jang berfikir, berdjoeang dari menderita membentoeak negara Republik Indonesia* (Djakarta: Berita Indonesia, 1946). There were two versions of the book published by two different publishers, but the content is the same.

experiments among the intellectual circles in Medan that were to have a significant long-term impact on the development of nationalism in the Indies.

Entertainment Journal

In March 1931 Adi Negoro launched the entertainment journal *Abad ke XX*. The journal's motto reads, "Don't pawn your nationhood!" (*Djangan kamoe gadaikan kebangsaanmoe!*). The inaugural essay starts with these words:

From *Pandji Poestaka* to *ABAD ke XX*...

Their activities there are the same as here [Indonesia]. We are never hesitant or lazy to work, because we worship work. The difference is here there is "self-activity" (*autoaktiviteit*).

What did we say in one of our daily notes? Self-activity above everything else (*Autoaktiviteit ueber alles*). We set our goals high even though self-activity proceeds slowly and its preparation and provisions are not quite complete and perfect. But we will row our boat with the oars we can muster. Honor your work, especially work that is useful for the nation and homeland. Some people give up easily. Not us. Things around us can change, but the goals we set shine a light for our life's path.

We are not deliberately asking for sympathy or cheers from the crowd. If it feels appropriate to you, Sir, you are welcome to use whatever we serve here, and if not, get out your pen and ink and write to us.

All criticisms from the readers, even from the most humble, we shall accept willingly and attentively, because we live in the Twentieth Century in the spirit of democracy. All equal, like Muslims praying in a mosque, no king or

servants, old or young, destitute or wealthy ... there are only devoted Muslims!

As the saying goes: "The mind is the lantern of the heart." The most powerful weapon is not big cannons and all those world-binding technologies, because they all come from the evolution of human mind. In the end it is the human mind that can inspire. [...] A sharp and powerful weapon for advancement. There is no need to make this introduction long. Most readers will sooner or later become familiar with us. So we wish you: *horas ba* [a Toba Batak greeting].

With best wishes from us,

Adi Ngoro⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹⁵ Adi Ngoro, "Kata Pendahoeloean," *ABAD ke XX*, Thn. 1, No. 1 (March 1931), p. 1.

Dari Pandji Poestaka ke ABAD ke XX.

Aktiviteitnja sama djoega disana dan disini. Kita selaloe tidak segan dan tidak malas bekerdja keras karena memoeliakan kerdja. Tjoema bedanja disini ada autoaktiviteit.

Apa kata kita dalam salah satoe tjatetan kita sehari-hari? Autoaktiviteit ueber alles. Kita tarok dipoentjak tjita-tjita kita biarpoen autoaktiviteit itoe berdjalan dengan plan plan serta penjediaannja dan bekalannja tidak begitoe kompleet dan sempoerna. Tapi kita dajoengkan kapal kita dengan pengajoeh jang kita bisa koempoelkan. Moeliakan pekerdjaan, teroetama sekali moeliakan pekerjaan jang berpaedah bagi bangsa dan tanah air.

Ada orang jang lekas poetoesan asa. Kita tidak begitoe. Keadaan-keadaan dikeliling kita boleh berobah, tapi tjita-tjita kita tetapkan bersinar pada djalan penghidoepan kita.

Kita tidak sengadja minta sympathie atau tampik sorak orang banjak. Kalau rasanja baik bagi toean-toean, toean pakai apa jang kami hidangkan kepada toean-toean, kalau rasanja koerang enak ambil pena dan tinta dan toelis pada kami.

Segala kritiek dari pematja kita terima dengan soedi dan kita perhatikan meskipoen datangnya dari pihak jang paling rendah. Sebab kita hidoep dalam ABAD ke XX dengan semangat demokrasi. Sma rata, sebagaimana orang Islam sembahjang dalam mesdjid tidak ada radja, atau hamba, toea atau moeda, hina atau kaja... melainkan ada Moeslimin jang pertjaja!

Kata pepatah: "Fikir itoe pelita hati." Sendjata jang tadjam sekali boekan meriam jang besar-besar dan teknik jang membelit doenia sebab segala itoe berasal dari kemadjoean otak simanoesia. Melainkan fikiran itoe jang bisa berpengaroeh... Sendjata jang tadjam dan koeat oentoek kemadjoean.

Tidak oesah kita pandjangan kata pendahoeloean ini. Dengan sebagian besar dari pematja lama atau lambatnja kita soedah berkenalan dan boekan asing lagi. Sebab itoe kita oetjapkan: *horas be dan*

salam bahagia dari kami sekalian.

Adi Ngoro

Independent action was called for, the spirit of democracy was pursued; the mood of *Abad ke XX* was very patriotic. The journal proclaims, “it is the nationalistic age” (*zaman nasional*), when the nationalist movement (*pergerakan nasional*) seeks to attain self-government for the future. The way Adi Negoro conceptualized the nationalist movement was interesting because he emphasized that nationalism was healthy (*nationalisme is gezond*). He developed this idea of healthy nationalism in another article focusing on “national spirit” (*semangat nasional*).⁴⁹⁶ Against those who equated nationalist movement with communism – so that its activists needed to be reported to the police and banished to Digoel – Adi Negoro argued that nationalistic sentiments were in fact a sign of healthy mind and that people who regarded nationalists as criminals were the ones who needed to be sent to the mental hospital. He also maintained that the nationalist movement was an arena where people could exchange ideas. For this reason he established a journal that was designed to provide a space for discussion and to develop a healthy nationalistic spirit for the people.

The association that Adi Negoro made between nationalism and health went beyond metaphors, because the journal also drew attention to health issues. Articles on health (*kesehatan*) and detailed pictures of human bodies appeared on regular basis and distinguished the journal from other periodicals. Having been educated in Germany, Adi Negoro seems to have been influenced by a concept of nationalism prevalent in Germany that was closely linked with ideas of masculinity, ideal physique, and bodily vigor; in this view, young men with healthy minds and bodies were best capable to realize the German nation.⁴⁹⁷ Adi Negoro’s journal, arguably,

⁴⁹⁶ “ABAD XX: Bersemangat Nasional,” *ABADD ke XX*, Thn. 1, No. 11 (August 1931), pp. 185-186.

⁴⁹⁷ George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*, (New York: H. Fertig, 1985).

was promoting this ideal – that healthy body and mind were an important combination for healthy nationalism.

Abad ke XX also provided fiction and light reading. It offered short stories, serialized stories, and stories about Western countries. Among its most popular features were the stories it offered about criminals. In its early years the journal carried an eccentric feature called “Mystery Story,” consisting of a one-page mystery story in English. The first story was “Tale of the Poisoned Dagger.”⁴⁹⁸ It was a story of a Chinese detective, “Foo Wang, who at the time enjoyed the reputation of being the Sherlock Holmes of China.” Foo Wang is put in charge of the investigation of murders by a poisoned dagger in Shanghai. He finds clues that lead him to Chen-kin-Lung, leader of the most notorious secret society, the Ko Lao Hui. Foo Wang hunts down Chen-kin-Lung, but the latter is mysteriously gone after the two talk about the case. Readers were reminded of this “Mystery Story” seven years later when they encountered an article in *Abad XX* entitled “*Criminaliteit, Politie dan Detectiveroman*” (Crime, Police, and Detective Novels),⁴⁹⁹ which highlighted the stories of Al Capone (Al Capone), John Dillinger, Alvin Karvis (Karpis), and Paul Gorgouloff (Gorguloff). These figures were all contemporary American and Russian criminals: Capone (1899-1947) was an American gangster who led a criminal syndicate in Chicago; Dillinger (1903-1934) a bank robber in the Midwest during the early 1930s; Karpis (1907-1979) was associated with the Barker gang in the 1930s United States; Gorguloff (1895-1932) was a Russian émigré to France who assassinated French President Paul Doumer.

⁴⁹⁸ “Mystery Story: Tale of the Poisoned Dagger,” *ABAD ke XX*, Thn. 1, No. 17/18 (December 1931), p. 249.

⁴⁹⁹ “Criminaliteit, Politie dan Detectiveroman,” *ABAD XX*, 3-dummy number, (January 25, 1939), pp. 12-13.

Abad XX's strategy of attracting an audience through the lure of criminal and detective stories turned out to be successful. In one of the journal's articles, "*Roman Criminele di Inggeris*" (Crime Novels in England), crime novels (*roman criminele*, *roman pendjahat*) and detective novels (*roman detectief*) were described as not only a form of entertainment, but also as a symbol of modern literature. This, we are told, was the view in Britain, where this type of popular literature had been well established and prolifically published. The article also noted that popular literature was not only widely read, but also lifted up the quality of English literature in general.⁵⁰⁰ Learning from the British experience, the writer was confident that producing and circulating popular novels would contribute to the development of modern Indonesian literature as well as modern Indonesian readers. As I shall examine below, this was the philosophy that brought about the emergence of popular journals called "*roman pitjisan*" (literally, dime novels) as an important literary genre in the Indies from 1938 onwards. *Abad XX*'s modern style and content – complete with pictures – was novel to the reading public and attracted a wide range of readers. Its distributors spread from Medan, Atjeh, Tapanoeli, West Sumatra, and South Sumatra, to Java, Borneo, Celebes, and even to Kuala Kangsar in British Malaya. As I shall discuss below, this distribution network overlapped with those of Islamic journals.

Espionage and Underground: Journalistic Challenge

In addition to running an entertainment journal, Adi Negoro took up a literary challenge in the world of journalism. His motivation was a desire to attract readers to *Pewarta Deli* and to encourage their participation in politics. For this purpose, he decided to draw their attention to underground communist activity.

⁵⁰⁰ "Roman Criminele di Inggeris," *ABAD XX*, Vol. 4, No. 13 (March 30, 1940), p. 8.

After the failed uprisings in 1926 and 1927, the communist movement became a more sensitive issue than ever in the Indies. This context fostered a unique atmosphere concerning press coverage of communist activities. While introducing *persbreidel*, an administrative measure to suppress the press that had led to an age of darkness for political activism, the Indies state took advantage of this atmosphere to create the myth (as well as an engineered reality) of an ideal society. The best example of this was the case of Boven Digoel, which was established as an ideal colony. Press coverage of the colony had contributed to a widely publicized image of Digoel as a place of discipline, self-sufficiency, and advancement in comparison with other places in Indonesians.

While Boven Digoel was a place for the reform of communists, many “fugitives” remained who were vulnerable to arrest. After the PKI was banned, its spin-off communist associations, which went underground after 1927, became the next main target of the Indies state. One communist underground was called the Republic of Indonesia Party (*Pari*) established in 1927, and its leader was the prominent communist, Ibrahim gelar Datuk Tan Malaka, or Tan Malaka. *Pari* did not have a mass movement base, but instead had a transnational network in Asia. For the Indies authorities, monitoring these transnational activities required a transnational surveillance system. Ultimately, PID was assigned the task of destroying the network. In order for PID to closely monitor *Pari*, it established international cooperation with British, French, American, and Siamese authorities.⁵⁰¹ Spies and informants were stationed everywhere to crackdown on the communist movements. Their supposed secrecy, however, was doubtful, because people were well aware of

⁵⁰¹ Shiraishi, “Policing the Phantom Underground,” pp. 1-46. The core member of *Pari*, Djamaloeddin Tamin wrote his autobiography in 1957, and it detailed how he fought against the international intelligence network. Djamaluddin Tamin, *Sedjarah PKI. Djilid III* (Jakarta: 1957).

their existence and mission.⁵⁰² Still, this cooperative international surveillance worked systematically, and the underground communist movement found it difficult to evade the intelligence community.

The politically charged atmosphere concerning news coverage of communist activities opened the way for creative journalists to inform the general public of the existence of “underground” Pari in a unique way. First of all, intelligence information gathered at the time had a Janus-faced nature, which derived from the nature of PID. On the one hand, intelligence information was supposed to be secret and circulated only within a tight intelligence community; ordinary people had no access to it. On the other hand, collecting this information required surveillance activity that drew from innumerable sources for thorough observation. Unlike the classified information itself that the intelligence community shared, some of the details regarding the method and process of information collection were easily observed by the public. This exposure to the public derived from requirements of PID’s activity. Although it had its own agents, the number of these was limited and covering the entire geographic area of Indonesia with a staff of this size was nearly impossible. Hence PID needed to rely on many informal field agents to build a network able to cover Pari activities comprehensively. For this, it recruited amateur spies and informants from ordinary people for daily surveillance and information gathering.⁵⁰³

Recruitment of informal spies was an easy task for PID. The intelligence service usually recruited people of educated background, and in this regard journalists often served as useful informal agents. It did not have to train them; in fact it was

⁵⁰² “Spion2 oentoek membaoeni djedjaknja Communisten itoe banyak Sekali dipakai,” in “Spionnage dienst di Timoer Djaoh,” *Pewarta Deli*, February 17, 1934.

⁵⁰³ Some audience was already familiar with daily spy and/or private detective activities. For instance, in Semaoen’s popular novel of 1921, *Hikajat Kadiroen*, in his capacity of private citizen, Kadiroen, who is then a local official, disguises and wanders in the city and villages to collect information on ordinary people’s daily life. During this private mission, no one can identify Kadiroen in the street. What Kadiroen does is not a spy operation, but rather is a work of private detective.

better to keep them as amateurs. Important here is the tension that existed between what kind of information these informal agents gathered and the very limited information they themselves were allowed to see. To a certain extent, conducting effective undercover work requires that spies have access to information about their targets. Since informal spies were barred from access to confidential information that the formal intelligence community shared, another kind of information was needed that could be made available to them. This dilemma opened a crack for the vernacular press in the Indies to report on Pari without immediate risk of government crackdown, which in turn made it possible for the audience to read about Pari's mysterious underground activities. Although Pari was a sensitive issue, the colonial government did not classify it as a forbidden topic. Negative commentary against Pari would have been welcomed by the authorities, but positive coverage of it or passing on its political message was also allowed. Among local periodicals, the Medan-based vernacular daily, *Pewarta Deli*, under Adi Negoro's leadership, took advantage of this situation and covered Pari related news in the 1930s. To report about Pari, it relied on Dutch press coverage such as that found in *Java Bode*, the publications of international news agencies, and sometimes the files of the Political Intelligence Service that was made available locally. *Java Bode*'s reports on Pari were useful and "safe" (that is, acceptable by the authorities) because it was under an ultra-conservative Dutch chief editor H. C. Zentgraaf between 1932 and 1938 and regularly fulminated against Indonesian communists.⁵⁰⁴ By following this strategy, *Pewarta Deli*'s coverage of Pari was never questioned by the authorities or subjected to *persbreidel*. Coincidentally, *Pewarta Deli*'s coverage of Pari started a month before the first *persbreidel* case was approved by the Indies state. Its coverage of Pari, however, was not comprehensive,

⁵⁰⁴ Frances Gouda and Thijs Brocades Zaalberd, *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia: US Foreign Policy and Indonesian Nationalism 1920-1949* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), p. 97.

only sporadically published, and careful to stay clear of promoting Pari's political message. Over the period of seven years from 1932 to 1938, it had twenty-five articles that were related to Pari. Despite its limited coverage of Pari, it published factual news about the organization and particularly about Tan Malaka and other movement leaders of the Sumatran regions. With this coverage *Pewartu Deli* managed to contribute uniquely to the creation of legendary figures.

Tan Malaka and Djamaloeddin Tamin were two names that *Pewartu Deli* often mentioned after 1932, even though there were other top communist leaders in the 1910s and the 1920s, such as Hadji Misbach, Semaoen, Darsono, Alimin, Moeso, and Soebakat. Not coincidentally, the latter group of communists was Javanese, whereas both Tan Malaka and Djamaloeddin Tamin were Minangkabau. *Pewartu Deli* closely followed the latter, presumably because Tan Malaka and Tamin came from Sumatra and their stories were more fascinating for the Minangkabau audience. *Pewartu Deli* also introduced its readers to the world of spies and intelligence activities. In a way the ambiguous border between press coverage and fictional stories had created a space for the audience to participate imaginatively in the struggle of Pari.

Pari

On June 1, 1927, the three ex-PKI exiles, Tan Malaka, Djamaloeddin Tamin, and Soebakat, established Pari in Bangkok. Its objective was to achieve full and complete independence for Indonesia. Its operations however were based outside Indonesia. All three of Pari's leaders were international fugitives and desperately needed to find secure places of residence and sources of income. After Pari's establishment the decision was made to split its leadership up to better evade capture.

Soekabat remained in Bangkok, while Djamaloeddin Tamin left for Singapore and Tan Malaka for Manila.⁵⁰⁵

Within days of his return to Manila in August 1927, Tan Malaka was arrested by the American authorities and deported to Amoy, China, with little possibility of maintaining contact with his comrades. Soebakat found employment in Bangkok and remained active for two years until he was seized by the Siamese authorities in October 1929. Djamaloeddin Tamin found a safe place in Singapore from where he could keep in touch with Indonesia and former PKI members, until his capture by the British authorities in September 1932.⁵⁰⁶

Secrecy was the hallmark of Pari networking and activities. Members kept a low profile in their respective places, and communicated using codes. The codes devised to mask personal details, place names and political communications were elaborate, and from the outset Pari used them heavily in their documents. Even its manifesto was full of codes when referring to names and places. The Dutch authorities were able to intercept many items of their correspondence, and yet failed to break all the codes. Partially broken codes that were reported in secret Dutch colonial documents show how Pari members and former PKI activists corresponded with each other. In 1935 the Dutch authorities translated and made a summary of the Pari manifesto. This decoded translation goes as follows:

Not long afterwards LIA (Boedi) and JATIM (the alias of Moeso) came to Hanoi (Amoy) and wanted to travel to Tokyo with two others. This was not possible because of passport difficulties. So DENMAS (Alimin) who was

⁵⁰⁵ Helen Jarvis, *Partai Republik Indonesia (PARI): Was It 'The Sole Golden Bridge to the Republic of Indonesia'?* (Townsville: Occasional Paper No. 11, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1981), pp. 10-11.

⁵⁰⁶ Djamaluddin Tamin, *Sedjarah PKI. Djilid III* (Jakarta: 1957), pp. 61-82.

then in Tokyo with HASNI (Tan Malaka) conveyed this information. LIA (Boedi) and JATIM (Moeso) telegraphed to HASNI (Tan Malaka) from Hanoi (possibly Amoy or Singapore) asking him to come there. HASNI (Tan Malaka) proposed to hold calm discussions in Hanoi (Amoy) with the prominent leaders of the islands, since he surmised that things had taken place without the knowledge of Moscow.

JATIM (Moeso) replied in a furious letter to HASNI (Tan Malaka). He said that he had been appointed by the eleven leaders to go to HASNI (Tan Malaka) and to invite him to travel to Moscow to discuss banknotes (the revolution). [...]

Knowing that DENMAS (Alimin) was a member of the PKI leadership and had recently come from Java and, moreover, that he was in possession of legitimate papers from the Japanese authorities on Formosa, and considering that HASNI (Tan Malaka) was under treatment from a doctor, he (Tan Malaka) agreed. He gave DENMAS (Alimin) the funds they needed for the journey. To cover himself, he gave DENMAS (Alimin) a letter contained short theses, with which DENMAS (Alimin) approved. [...]

KOEBAN and SJAK (possibly Soetan Said Ali and Abdul Karim) were already in Hanoi (Singapore). A full code was worked out between HASNI (Tan Malaka) and DENMAS (Alimin). The writers then state that DENMAS, although he had sufficient money, did not again raise contact, and did not bring forward the theses in the meeting (in Singapore). Instead he set off for Moscow with JATIM (Moeso).

Then HASNI (Tan Malaka) later came to Hanoi (Singapore) and there met MOECTAR (Soebakat) and found there had been no proper meeting, and HASNI's theses had remained unopened.⁵⁰⁷

Tan Malaka and Alimin were mainly responsible for preparing the codes used in Pari correspondence. Codes were used when their letters made reference to actual Pari-related activists and activities, while former PKI leaders who did not have any contact with Pari were referred to using their real names, such as Baars, Sneevliet, Semaoen, Darsono and Soegono. Pari's leadership knew that they were kept under severe surveillance and had to go about their business carefully and clandestinely; especially after the Dutch authorities broke the codes for major names and places in the manifesto.

In the Indies there were ten cities where Pari had its associates. On Java they included Soerakarta, Tjepoe, Soerabaja, Wonogiri, Kediri, and Batavia. Outside Java, Pari members could be found in Banjarmasin (West Borneo), Medan (East Coast of Sumatra), Sungei Gerong (South Sumatra) and Riau (South Sumatra).⁵⁰⁸ Active members were Sarosoan and Danoewirjo in Soerakarta, Soenarjo in Soerabaja, Soetedjo in Tjepoe, Ngadimin in Wonogiri, R. Moerdono in Kediri, Jachja Nasution and Daja bin Joesoef in Batavia, Mardjono and Moenandar in Bandjarmasin, Iwa Kusuma Sumantri in Medan, Mohammed Arif Siregar and eight others in Sungei Gerong, and Umar Giri Abdurrachman and Subandi in Riau.⁵⁰⁹ Despite the organization's secrecy these Pari members were arrested by the authorities and sent to Boven Digoel.

⁵⁰⁷ "Summary of the Manifesto of the Partij Republik Indonesia (PARI) from Mailrapport 446x/36, translated in Jarvis, *Partai Republik Indonesia (PARI)*, "Appendix 2," pp. 6-8.

⁵⁰⁸ Intriguingly, none of those cities belong to Minang territory where Tan Malaka originated.

⁵⁰⁹ Jarvis, *Partai Republik Indonesia (PARI)*, Footnotes, pp. 4-5.

Arrest of Pari associates took place abroad, too, where the organization was under international surveillance from the beginning. The British, French, American, and Siamese counterparts of the Dutch intelligence service were all primed to detect communist activities in the region. The colonial powers believed that the Comintern was planning to cause disturbances in the colonies. Regular reports by consular officials and secret police in the region reinforced this idea by adding a section on the Comintern related movements and activities. Western officials saw the Comintern's hand behind the communist uprisings in 1926 and 1927 in the Indies, and the *Nghe Tinh* Rebellion of 1930-1931 in French Indochina.⁵¹⁰ Warning signs had been notable in the region already, and these incidents turned these incipient developments into real threats. There was no doubt that intelligence agencies of multiple nations were watching Pari closely and exchanged information on its activities. This transnational intelligence network paid off for the Dutch government. Major arrests of Pari members took place in 1928, 1929 and 1932.

As PID and its international counter partners uncovered Pari's underground activity in the region, the resulting series of captures almost destroyed the organization. Those who were arrested in foreign countries were sent "back" to the Indies and sent off to Boven Digoel. Despite international intelligence cooperation, however, Pari's leader, Tan Malaka, remained elusive and became famous for his international "fugitive" status throughout the 1930s.

Tan Malaka

Tan Malaka's uncanny ability to elude detainment earned him comparison with the Scarlet Pimpernel, the mysterious fictional hero in Baroness Emmuska Orczy's

⁵¹⁰ Anne L. Foster, "Alienation and Cooperation: European, Southeast Asian, and American Perceptions of Anti-Colonial Rebellion, 1919-1937," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1995).

adventure novels set during the French Revolution. “*Patjar Merah*,” the Malay translation of “Scarlet Pimpernel,” came to be attributed to him. As early as in October 1932, the local office of the Political Information Service (*archief Politieke Recherche*) in Medan had already described Tan Malaka as “the scarlet pimpernel” in its file.⁵¹¹

Ibrahim Datuk Tan Malaka had been the most popular communist figure in Indonesia since before the 1920s. Born in Padang Gadang near Suliki, West Sumatra, in 1894, he was educated at the teacher’s training school in Bukittinggi. He then was sent to the Netherlands to further his studies, so he could get a teacher’s license to teach at Dutch schools in the Indies. But his encounter with Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje⁵¹² changed his mind, and he spent most of his time reading books. It was the time of World War I when Europe was experiencing rapid social change and socialist thought was spreading among intellectuals. Tan Malaka thus began to lean towards socialist ideas, and Marx’s *Capital* became his favorite book.⁵¹³ Upon his return from the Netherlands in late 1919, he taught at school for a while in a plantation in East Sumatra. The inhuman conditions under which contract coolies worked there increased his passion for communism. In 1920 he moved to Semarang, Central Java, where he founded People’s Schools (*Sekolah Rakyat*) based on communist principles. In late 1921 he replaced Semaoen as the leader of PKI. Accused of delivering inflammatory speeches and writings, he was arrested by the Indies authorities and exiled to the Netherlands in March 1922. In late 1922 he moved to Berlin and then to

⁵¹¹ “Djamaloeddin Tamin,” *Pewarta Deli*, October 18, 1932. The scarlet pimpernel is Baroness Emmuska Orczy’s classic play in 1903 and her adventure novel in 1905. The story is set during the reign of terror during the French Revolution when the mysterious Scarlet Pimpernel and his league rescued aristocrats through underground channels and sent them to Britain.

⁵¹² Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) was professor of Oriental cultures and languages at Leiden University, and an Advisor on Native and Islamic Affairs to the Netherlands government.

⁵¹³ For Tan Malaka’s encounter with Snouck Hurgronje and socialist ideas, Nagazumi Akira, *Indonesia Minzoku Ishiki no Keisei* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1980), pp. 227-228.

Moscow, where he became involved with the politics of the Communist International (Comintern). In mid-1923 he was appointed as Comintern representative for Southeast Asia. He subsequently established his headquarters in Canton, China, in December 1923, moving to Manila in 1925, and to Singapore in 1926. He traveled to Canton, Manila, Bangkok, Shanghai, Tokyo and other places. In June 1927 in Bangkok, he founded the new party, Pari as an underground organization with a relatively small membership, but an international network.⁵¹⁴

For readers of *Pewarta Deli*, Tan Malaka was known as “*mysterieman*” (mystery man),⁵¹⁵ although in the first half of the 1920s his name was well publicized in the press in the Indies as well in newspapers of other countries. Also he was considered “dangerous” to public order by the Indies state. The authorities worried about his political influence over the public, including the effect of his published writings. In one example of this concern, an October 1926 news article in *Perwarta Deli* reported that a person named Raoef Waktoe was arrested by the police for the possession of the book *Naar de Republiek Indonesia* (Towards the Republic of Indonesia) written by Tan Malaka.⁵¹⁶ But in most of the press coverage of the Indies, Tan Malaka’s name disappeared from the latter half of the 1920s onwards, partly because of his “alleged” involvement in the communist rebellions of 1926 and 1927, and partly because PKI was banned. The rare exception to this pattern was *Pewarta Deli*, which continued to cover news on Tan Malaka and his party, Pari through the 1930s. In fact, it was *Pewarta Deli*’s articles that turned Tan Malaka into the “mystery man” and a legend.

⁵¹⁴ Harry Poeze, *Tan Malaka: Strijder voor Indonesië's vrijheid: levensloop van 1897 tot 1945* (’s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1976); Benedict Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), pp. 269-274.

⁵¹⁵ “Tan Malacca benar soedah dapat ditangkap?: Bersama Djamaloeddin Tamin akan diasingkan ke Boven Digoel,” *Pewarta Deli*, December 23, 1932.

⁵¹⁶ “Toe an Oesman glr. St. Keadilan,” *Pewarta Deli*, October 6, 1926. *Naar de Republiek Indonesia* was written in Dutch and published in Tokyo in 1925.

Even small “factual” articles contributed to the creation of his legendary image. For instance, the section “Indonesia” in the newspaper’s July 14, 1926, issue carried an article on Tan Malaka. It was probably one of the earliest occasions that his name appeared in the press after he was exiled from the Indies. The article reported that an alleged Tan Malaka had stayed at a Chinese hotel in Pajacombo in West Sumatra, and that the local police had come to search for him. When registering at the hotel, he signed his name as “Tan Min Siong.” In December 1925 he reportedly left Singapore and came to Pajacombo by way of Bengkalis. Dressed in Chinese attire, he told the hotel owner that he worked as a contractor who dealt with Chinese coolies in Bangka. People were suspicious of him because he pretended not to understand the Indonesian language and always spoke Chinese. When he checked out of the hotel, intentionally or otherwise, he used a ticket with the name Tan Malaka.⁵¹⁷ The ticket was the clue that the police used to identify him as Tan Malaka, whom they had known to be a smart and tricky leader (*pemimpin jang tjerdik*), as well as a famous red movement leader (*pemimpin merah jang terkenal*). The police searched for him everywhere in town, but in vain. This incident left many unanswered questions.⁵¹⁸

It is not clear if the mysterious person described in the *Perwarta Deli* report was really Tan Malaka. The more important issue, however, is the fact that the local police believed him to be Tan Malaka, and that the press reported it as such. By reading these newspaper articles, readers obtained an idea of who Tan Malaka was and how he moved around surreptitiously. Since articles did not inform readers of the intention of Tan Malaka’s actions, they could only speculate what his appearance in any given location actually signified. This is how the legendary figure of Tan Malaka was created.

⁵¹⁷ The article does not specify what kind of ticket that he used, but presumably he used it to pay his room.

⁵¹⁸ “Tan Malaka alias Tan Min Siong,” *Pewarta Deli*, July 14, 1926.

Since 1932 *Pewarta Deli* reported sporadically on Tan Malaka and his underground political party, Pari, along with its affiliated activists; Articles covered news of the main figures of the party against the context of international espionage activities that were carried out by the colonial powers, and which were reported as actual fact drawn from documents obtained from colonial authorities or stories reported by the international press. Little if any reference was ever made to statements made by Pari leaders themselves. Writers of *Pewarta Deli* maintained that they simply collected their information from existing, often secondary sources to create their own news stories.

By disguising himself and traveling under different names, Tan Malaka moved far afield in Asia and became known as a political figure who wandered overseas (*orang politik jang mengembara diloeaer negeri*). While sometimes arrested, he somehow always managed to escape from jail. A variety of anecdotes built up the Tan Malaka's image. Instructive is the rumor spread in December 1932 that Tan Malaka was captured by the British police in Hong Kong and would be sent back to Indonesia. Reports and rumors of his alleged arrest had already circulated numerous times before. In this instance, *Perwarta Deli* reported that while a press report of Tan Malaka's arrest in Hong Kong existed, rumor also had it that Djamaloeddin Tamin, who resided in Singapore, was actually Tan Malaka. Noting that in the case of Tan Malaka, most news coverage turned out to be false. *Pewarta Deli* concluded its article with a question, "Was he really arrested? We are waiting for the truth regarding this news."⁵¹⁹ Six weeks later, the newspaper appears to confirm that Tan Malaka was captured in Hong Kong and was now on his way to be sent back to Indonesia.⁵²⁰ The report was somber in tone:

⁵¹⁹ "Ibrahim Tan Malaka djago Communist ditangkap?: Oleh politie Inggeris di Hongkong, katanja: Akan dibawa ke Indonesia," *Pewarta Deli*, December 5, 1932.

⁵²⁰ "Iman Mahdi dari "Pari" (Partai Republik Indonesia)," *Pewarta Deli*, January 14, 1933.

Sometimes his escape is so close that people think, for instance, that after he departed Hong Kong, his life depended on a strand of silk. Whether or not he is still alive is a big question mark.”

Two months later, however, yet another article in *Perwarta Deli* poked fun at the rumor of Tan Malaka’s arrest. The headline asks, “Is it really true that Ibrahim Tan Malaka has been arrested in Hong Kong?” but the subtitle gives away the answer. The article promises a “news update that is awe-inspiring, surprising, sensational,” especially for certain (presumably Dutch) elements of the “press which have been reveling and laughing [since the news of the arrest] and are now stunned.”⁵²¹

In its June 30, 1933 edition, *Pewarta Deli* made reference to Tan Malaka as the Scarlet Pimpernel for the first time, almost nine months after its reporter found a file at the office of the PID in Medan drawing an analogy between Tan Malaka and “the scarlet pimpernel” of Baroness Orczy’s famed adventure novel.⁵²² The fugitive is said to be “shrewd as the Scarlet Pimpernel” (*litjinnja sebagai Patjar Merah*).⁵²³ The analogy seemed to catch on as “Patjar Merah” came to be established as Tan Malaka’s nickname.

On February 2, 1934, *Pewarta Deli* shared some confusing information that had been reported in the Dutch newspaper *Java Bode*. The article essentially

⁵²¹ “Apa betoel Ibrahim Tan Malaka soedah ditangkap di Hongkong?: Pekabaran jang menta’adjoebkan, heran, menggemparkan, pers sama berdjingkerak-djingkerak dan tertawa2 achirnja melongo,” *Pewarta Deli*, March 3, 1933.

⁵²² “Djamaloeddin Tamin,” *Pewarta Deli*, October 18, 1932.

⁵²³ This is the first time *Pewarta Deli* referred Tan Malaka as “Patjar Merah.” “Tan Malaka dan soal rechtspositienja di djadjahan Amerika,” *Pewarta Deli*, June 30, 1933. The first Malay translation of Baroness Orczy’s *Scarlet Pimpernel* was published in 1926 by Balai Poestaka under the title *Patjar Mérah*. The translator, R. Poeradiredja, was the chief editor for the Sundanese language in the office of Balai Poestaka; see Mikihiro Moriyama, *Sundanese Print Culture and Modernity in Nineteenth-Century West Java* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), p. 124. The word “*pachar*” means “trafficking” in Bengali, but in this case “*patjar*” is more likely to refer to a type of bushy flower, similar to pimpernel, called “*pacar cina*” (*Aglaia odorata*) in Malay.

emphasized the deep mystery that surrounded the true whereabouts of Tan Malaka. One rumor had it that he was in Singapore, while another reported his sighting in Medan. In both cases the local authorities confirmed the reports as false.⁵²⁴ In the end, noted the article, nobody seemed to know where Tan Malaka really was; Shanghai, Canton, Singapore, Atjeh, Medan, Soeliki, Pajakoemboeh had all been reported as possible places where he appeared to be. In the first half of the 1930s, reports of sightings were limited to a variety of places in Asia. By the second half of the 1930s his fame traveled beyond Asia. In 1938 a rumor from Cairo said that the British intelligence agency had captured Tan Malaka in Tehran, but later he escaped. In Egypt, Iran, Afghanistan, India, Ceylon, and Russia, he was now known as “the Indonesian Scarlet Pimpernel” (*Pachar Merah Indonesia*).⁵²⁵ Rumors of Tan Malaka’s arrest always came with names of international or local intelligence agencies, but he often prevailed over and made a mockery of foreign authorities by escaping from prisons. For his ardent followers in Indonesia, it did not really matter whether or not these rumors were true; they took pleasure in reading about “his” adventure and conjuring images of him outsmarting the colonial authorities.

Djamaloeddin Tamin

Djamaloeddin Tamin was the number two leader of *Pari*, but significantly lesser than Tan Malaka in the eyes of *Pewarta Deli* readers. From Singapore Tamin in fact “almost single handedly” ran *Pari*’s network in the Indies. Yet he kept such a low profile until his arrest in September 1932 by British police that in December 1932

⁵²⁴ “Tan Malak di Singapoera?,” *Pewarta Deli*, February 10, 1934.

⁵²⁵ Muhamad Iskandar Ishaq, “President Partai Republik Indonesia tertangkap ditanah Iran,” *Pewarta Deli*, April 5, 1938.

Pewarta Deli still described him as “only a minor leader whose name was not known before” (*leider ketjil sadja jang doeloean tidak begitoe terkenal namanja*).⁵²⁶

Born in 1900 in Kota Gedang, Padang Pandjang, Tamin graduated from a government elementary school in 1913. He then studied at the Sumatra Thawalib School in Padang Pandjang where he met Hadji Rasoel, who was the founder of the Islamic Union (*Sarikat Islam*) in West Sumatra. The intellectual and philosophical influence of Hadji Rasoel led Tamin to join the PKI in 1922.⁵²⁷ Tamin recalled Padang Pandjang in 1920 as follows:

Padang Panjang, a small town in Central Sumatra, was the gathering place and centre of Religious schools and students of mysticism from all of Sumatra, and there from the beginning of 1920 the Socialism-Communism of the Red League [*Sarikat Merah*] began to be discussed. So, from the beginning Padang Panjang became the centre of the red group, became the red town in Sumatra, simply by establishing the BOPET MERAH [sic: Red Canteen] as the Red group’s cooperative branch there, that is five or six months before the PKI was born in Semarang in 1920.⁵²⁸

There he joined the communist movement (*gerakan merah*) with his friend Baharoeddin Saleh. In 1923 Tamin collaborated with Hadji Datuk Batuah in editing the newspaper *Pemandangan Islam* (The View of Islam), which “sought the common ground between Islam and communism in their struggle against capitalism and

⁵²⁶ “Tan Malacca benar soedah dapat ditangkap?: Bersama Djamaloeddin Tamin akan diasingkan ke Boven Digoel,” *Pewarta Deli*, December 23, 1932.

⁵²⁷ Kahin, *From Rebellion to Integration*, p. 39.

⁵²⁸ Tamin, *Sedjarah PKI*, p. 10. Translation is taken from Kahin, *From Rebellion to Integration*, p. 38. Emphasis in original.

colonialism,”⁵²⁹ and hence was considered the ideological mouthpiece of Islamic-Communism.⁵³⁰

The story of Tamin’s activism begins with his arrest. One day Tamin and his friend went to Kota Lawas to give speeches at a communist political gathering. Government spies (*spion spion Pemerintah*) were all over the event. At the gathering Tamin delivered a speech which was immediately charged as a “speech offence.” He was sentenced to nine months in prison by the court in Padang Pandjang.⁵³¹

Intriguingly, *Pewarta Deli* reconstructed Djamaloeddin Tamin’s life based on clippings from Dutch newspapers and police reports. It relied on available “safe” sources, and only reported “events” in which Tamin was involved. In this sense its coverage of Tamin was similar to the reports that the police would make. There was no relaying of Tamin’s remarks, so readers could not know his real thoughts.

According to *Pewarta Deli*’s reconstruction of his political career, Tamin was stationed in Singapore, and because of its geographical position he was able to function as the cornerstone of the regional communist movement, interacting with the people from Europe and China who came and went there. The Kuomintang movement was propagating bolshevism in Singapore, which influenced the Chinese in the Indies. Meanwhile, Tamin had connections with Chinese communists from China who were working in the Straits Settlements as well as those who were active in the anti-Dutch movement. In Singapore Tamin was regarded as a leader of the communist movement.⁵³² He organized political action (*actie*) with Chinese revolutionary figures and with them committed to the establishment of the South Seas Communist Party,

⁵²⁹ Kahin, *From Rebellion to Integration*, p. 39.

⁵³⁰ Taufik Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra (1927-1933)* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University, 1971), pp. 72-73.

⁵³¹ “Jamaloeddin Tamin,” *Pewarta Deli*, October 18, 1932.

⁵³² “Djamaloedin Tamin, pengadjoer “Partai Republik India”: Soedah dibawa ke Betawi: Organisatie pergerakannja di Singapore,” *Pewarta Deli*, December 19, 1932.

which oversaw communist movements and actions in the British Malaya, the Indies, Siam, and French Indochina.⁵³³ In 1934, Tamin was charged with and found guilty of attempting subversion because of his commitment to the 1927 uprising in West Sumatra, but before the actual uprising he managed to escape to Malaya and then headed to the coast in South China.⁵³⁴

Later Tamin moved to Singapore where he lay low. He also became involved in forming and leading *Pari*, along with Tan Malaka and Soebakat, before the latter was captured in Bangkok and later committed suicide in his home in Java. In June 1930 Tamin became involved in secretly working with underground Chinese communists in Shanghai, which also involved contact with leaders active in organizing efforts towards an international communist movement, including Lefanc Serge, an agent from the Third International, and “Noullens,” the leader of the Pan Pacific Labor Union. While the arrest and imprisonment of these latter collaborators cut these secret efforts short, Tamin often gave speeches at political gatherings in Shanghai as member of the South Seas Communist Party, and made several trips to Moscow and Vladivostok. According to the account of Dutch government spies in 1932, Tamin had built relations with several people from Java and Sumatra, but until then his intention was not yet clear. In September 1932 he was arrested in Singapore along with nine associates.

Djamaloeddin Tamin was described as an influential activist not only in *Pari* but also in the context of the regional communist movement in Asia. An October 1932 article in *Pewarta Deli*, published one month after he was arrested in Singapore, was titled “The role of Djamaloeddin Tamin in the Communist movement in the Pacific part of Asia” (*Rolnja Djamaloeddin Tamin dalam pergerakan Kommunist*

⁵³³ In fact, Tamin opposed to the idea that the South Seas Communist Party oversaw communist party activities in other regions.

⁵³⁴ “Imam Mahdi dari ‘Pari’ (Partai Republik Indonesia),” *Pewarta Deli*, January 14, 1933.

ditepi benoea Asia sebelah ke Laoetan Tedoeh) and covered the latter part of his activist career.⁵³⁵ Through this and subsequent reports, *Pewarta Deli* introduced and constructed an image of Djamaloeddin Tamin for its readers.

But unlike Tan Malaka, who later became known as the Indonesian Scarlet Pimpernel in popular novels, no novel featuring Tamin as the main hero was ever written, nor much else was known about him. Newspaper articles were the only medium through which people could get to know him. The way in which *Pewarta Deli* constructed his image as an internationally active communist in Asia was similar to that of Tan Malaka. The international intelligence community was said to have had a hard time identifying both of them. Reportedly, as Tamin and Tan Malaka appeared able to thoroughly change their appearances, the local police in Medan kept many pictures of both in their files in the hopes these would help them identify and capture the two activists. Even pictures taken on the afternoon and in the evening of the same day showed them in guises that were completely different.⁵³⁶ Many times the intelligence agents were said to have become unsure that the persons they were monitoring were the right ones.

Pari Smoked Out

In the latter half of 1933, the news of Tamin's arrest and the capture of Moehammad Arif Siregar alias M. Ajoep Siregar and his colleagues in Soengai Gerong shook the confidence of Pari supporters and audience. Pari was supposed to be an underground organization and its activities were undercover, and yet its major activists and associates had got caught. These high profile arrests not only caused

⁵³⁵ "Djamaloeddin Tamin: Rolnja Djamaloeddin Tamin dalam pergerakan Kommunist ditepi benoea Asia sebelah ke Laoetan Tedoeh" *Pewarta Deli*, October 15, 1932.

⁵³⁶ "Djamaloeddin Tamin: Rolnja Djamaloeddin Tamin dalam pergerakan Kommunist ditepi benoea Asia sebelah ke Laoetan Tedoeh" *Pewarta Deli*, October 15, 1932.

anxiety and diminishing hope for revolutionary action among Pari supporters, but also demonstrated the power of the PID in the Indies to successfully identify and eventually capture underground activists, despite the latter's efforts at keeping a low profile in their respective hiding places. The PSI's achievement alarmed the public, and made them aware of the presence of government "eyes" watching from every corner.

Tamin's detainment seriously damaged Pari, because of his important role in leading the organization's activities in the Indies from his base in Singapore. Upon this turn of events, some vernacular press newspapers held anti-Pari campaigns. In an editorial of *Bintang Timoer*, Parada Harahap openly questioned whether Pari really existed, and whether any particular activity or ideology could actually be ascribed to it. Another vernacular press, *Han Po*, shared this view and doubted the reality of Pari. Considering that *Han Po* was a Chinese-Malay newspaper in Palembang where the major arrest operation took place at Soengei Gerong on September 17, 1932,⁵³⁷ it was possible that the newspaper had tried to calm down members of the local community, among whom rumors on Pari's seizure were spreading.

As a pro-Pari media, *Pewarta Deli* felt the need to respond to the above allegations by other newspapers. It also needed to regain shaken confidence of its audience. So about a year after the Soengei Gerong operation, *Pewarta Deli* acknowledged that major Pari members had been detained and were scheduled to be sent to Boven Digoel. The newspaper revealed that it had received letters from a Pari detainee and published them in the October 5, 1933, issue. The article was titled "*Partai Republik Indonesia: Satoe pergerakan revoloesioner jang tersemboenji bagi oemoem*" ("The Republic of Indonesia Party: A revolutionary movement hidden from

⁵³⁷ Palembang was an important oil-refining center in the Indies and Soengei Gerong was where the American company Standard Oil refineries adjoining the eastern side of the Dutch Shell refineries.

the public”), and it contained “two letters” from Mohd. Arif Siregar along with some explanations about Pari’s current circumstances.⁵³⁸

Pewarta Deli admitted to have been hesitant about publishing the letters, taking into consideration Pari’s secretive nature, and explained that it finally decided to open the letters to the public in order to prove wrong the allegations that Pari was only a fabrication. For this reason, too, the paper had decided to present the account of this particular Pari member in the original first-person narrative. It was very rare for a first-person narrative to be publicized in *Perwarta Deli*, but in this case, the newspaper’s editors knew the report had to sound convincing enough for the readers to be certain about Pari.

The author of the letters was Arif Siregar, who was an active associate of Pari in Soengei Gerong, Palembang. He was detained by PID on September 17, 1932, spent one year at HV Bewaring Struiswijk prison in Batavia, and then was deported to Boven Digoel in September 1933. According to *Pewarta Deli* the two letters were dated on September 25 and 26, 1933, respectively, though one letter clearly showed that it was written on September 23.⁵³⁹ When he wrote these letters, Arif Siregar had just been transferred from the prison, and brought to Tandjoeng Priok, the seaport of Batavia, on his way to Boven Digoel. Due to his status as detainee, he was under tight security and had little time to write letters, and hence the notes were relatively concise.

Your Excellency (*Padoeka toean jang terhormat*):

Our intention to write this is not solely for Mr. Parada Harahap.

⁵³⁸ “Partai Republik Indonesia: Satoe pergerakan revoloesioner jang tersemboenji bagi oemoem” *Pewarta Deli*, October 10, 1933.

⁵³⁹ In the letter, however, it says that “today 23 September 1933” (Ini hari 23 9-33), and so it can be assumed that the date of written was September 23, but the date of censored was September 25, which was the date that editorial of *Pewarta Deli* referred to.

We know that this writing is not normal, nor done in an especially refined way.

We write this in haste on our way to deportation in Boven Digoel. Of course everyone can understand how tight the security is, especially with our hands being handcuffed. But even in this condition we still try to write this brief note, which happens to be in our possession.

Today September 23, 1933, I, M. Arif Siregar alias M. Ajoob Siregar originating from Baringin (Sipirok) was released from HV Bewaring Struiswijk (Batavia Centrum) and sent to Boven Digoel, along with associates Djamaloeddin Tamin and Aifjasin Tenek alias Daja Joesoef, both from West Sumatra. All three of us are victims from the Republic of Indonesia Party, which is shortened as "PARI."

On 2 June 1927, PARI was established, and since then, until the day we were arrested in Soengei Gerong (Palembang) on September 17, 1932, we lived to defend PARI. With full conviction and resolution, we decided to defend PARI because we knew PARI, a revolutionary Proletarian Party, has relied solely on the consciousness and power of the Revolutionary Proletarian Laborers and Peasants in Indonesia.

Enthusiasm of PKI leaders in the past and the misunderstanding of "Revolution" by our PKI associates have pushed PKI into an abyss, so that hopes which had brought us closer to our goals in the past, to this day are still neglected.⁵⁴⁰

⁵⁴⁰ "Partai Republik Indonesia: Satoe pergerakan revoloesioner jang tersemboenji bagi oemoem," *Pewarta Deli*, October 5, 1933.

Padoeka toean jang terhormat:

Maksoed kita menoelis ini, boekanlah semata2 terhadap diri t. Parada Harahap sendiri.

Kita tahoe toelisan ini tidak menempoeh djalan setjara mestinja apa lagi dengan toelisan jang amat haloes poela.

The first short letter with some 240 words was clearly directed at Parada Harahap, who had questioned Pari's existence in his newspaper *Bintang Timoer*. Arif Siregar had apparently been aware of this allegation and his letter was in part a response to it. To substantiate his account, the letter contains concrete information such as dates, names of Pari members and their origins, and names of specific places. The letter indicates clearly that was written on September 23, 1933, on the day the writer and his associates were to be deported to Boven Digoel. They were self-described as Pari "victims" (*korban korban*). The next paragraph reviews the history of Pari, the date of its establishment and the writer's characterization of it as a revolutionary proletarian party. The last paragraph bears a veiled criticism of PKI and its leadership, whose (mis)understanding of "Revolution" (as uprising) had led to its collapse and neglect of the original goal (independent Indonesia). This view shares Tan Malaka's stance on PKI's failed "revolution."

The view also corresponds with the disapproving tone of the second letter, which opens with criticism of the Comintern in relation to local communist parties.

Your Excellency:

Kita menoelis dengan dengan tergopoh2 ialah dalam waktue perdjalanen ketempat pemboeangan kita di Boven Digoel. Semoea orang tentoe soedah makloem, bagaimana rapinja pendjagaan, serta poela dengan tangan jg selaloe dibelenggoe. Dalam hal jg demikian ditjoba djoega menoelis beriefkaart ini, jang kebetoelan masih ada dalam kandoengan kita.

Ini hari 23 9-33 kita M. Arif Siregar alias M. Ajoob Siregar asal dari Baringin (Sipirok) dikeloearkan dari H.v. Bewaring Struiswijk (Batavia C.) dan dikirim ke Boven Digoel, bersama kawan kawan, Djamaloeddin Tamin dan Aifjasin Tenek alias Daja Joesoef doea-doea asal dari S. Barat. Kami bertiga ini, ialah korban korban dari Partai Republik Indonesia jang dengan pendek diseboet "PARI."

Pada 2 Juni 1927, PARI dibangoenkan, dan sedjak itoe, sampai harinja kita ditangkap di Soengei Gerong (Palembang) pada 17 Sept. 1932, kita hidoep oentoek membela PARI. Dengan kejakinan jang penoeh dan toenggan hati, kita setoedjoe dan membela PARI sebab kita soedah tahoe PARI satoe Partai Proletaar revoloesioner, jg semata mata bersoendikan kesedaran dan kekoeatan Proletaar Beroeh dan Tani Revoloesioner di Indonesia sendiri.

Kerelahan2 pimpinan P.K.I. doeloe dan kesesatan paham "Revolutie" oleh kawan kawan PKI enz. Soedah mendjeroemoeskan PKI kedalam djoerang, sehingga harapan2 jang soedah mendekatkan kepada maksoed tempoh hari, sampai ini hari masih tertoeanda.

Taking into consideration the obliteration of PKI as of January 1, 1927; the postponement of Social Revolution and the Stabilization of German Capitalism by the Dawes Plan, and the betrayal by the Social Democrats in Germany in 1923; the leadership and attitudes by the Comintern and Soviet Russia, which want to decide on their own all the programs, tactics, actions and Revolution for all the Proletarians in the World, which brought catastrophe to the Communist Party of Asia (Canton, China) on May 1, 1927; and considering the regress and the weaknesses of Communist Parties in Proletarian countries, such as Europe and America, which have declined since 1923; PARI has settled on a “beginssel-program, work program, and organization” all its own, which are not related to Moscow’s Comintern nor to its Foreign Politics.

As long as the leadership and attitudes of the Communist are as such, as long as the Proletarian movements in all regions have not yet stood on their own consciousness and a power that is self-generated, PARI too will stand on its own, and built a Proletarian Republic of Indonesia. Therefore, it should be clear to all Proletarians in Indonesia that from time to time the Indonesian Proletarian Party [PARI] will work together with all Proletarian Parties in the World, so long as PARI will have the opportunity to preserve its own basis and stances. Certainly PARI as a Revolutionary Proletarian Party also moves toward “the Brotherhood of the World’s Poor,” which means “International Brotherhood.”

I, together with associates Djamaloeddin Tamin and A. Tenek alias Daja Joesoef, are the third time PARI victims who have been Digoelized (*di Digoelkan*). The first PARI victim to be Digoelized was associate Maswar

alias Oei Ah Thong, who was captured in Singapore on September 9, 1928 and Digoelized in 1929.

The second were associates Mardjono Soetedjo and six others who were Digoelized in 1931. Other than that, one victim who will always be remembered by members of PARI (Paristen) is the death of associate Soebakat in Glodok prison on February 15, 1930, after he was arrested in Siam (Bangkok) in September 1929.⁵⁴¹

That is all the time we have:

With respect,

Mohd. Arif Siregar

On the way to Boven Digoel⁵⁴²

⁵⁴¹ Another article reports that Soebakat committed suicide in the prison. "Imam Mahdi dari "Pari" (Partai Republik Indonesia)," *Pewarta Deli*, January 14, 1933.

⁵⁴² "Partai Republik Indonesia: Satoe pergerakan revoloesioner jang tersemboenji bagi oemoem," *Pewarta Deli*, October 5, 1933.

Padoeka toean jang terhormat:

Mengingat kepada kehantjoerannja P.K.I. sampei 1 Janurari 27 mengingat tertoesandja Sociaal Revolutie dan Stabielnja – Kapitalisme Djerman oleh Dawes Plan, seria chianatnja Kaoem Sociaal Democraat di Djerman '23; meingat pimpinan dan sikap2 Kommintern dengan Sovjet Rusland, jang semata-mata maoe mentjetak sendiri, seloeroeh programma, taktiek, actie dan Revolutie oentoek seloeroeh Proletariaat di Doenia, sehingga membawa hantjoernja Partai Kommunist di Asia (Canton Tiongkok) pada 1 Mei 1927, dan mengingat kepada kemoendoeran dan kelemahan kelemahan Partai Kommunist dinegeri negeri Proletariaat sendiri, ja'ni Europa dan America jang beroentoen2 djatoeh sedari 1923, maka PARI menetapkan "bagsinsel-programma, werkprogramma, organisatie dan tactieknja sendiri," ja'ni tidak berhoeboengan dengan Kommintern Moscow dan tidak poela dengan Politiek Loear Negeri.

Selama keadaan pimpinan dan sikap sikapnja Kommunist jang demikian, selama gerakan Proletariaat di seloeroeh daerah, beloem berdiri atas sendi kesedaran dan kekoeatan jang lahir dalam karangan daerah2 itoe sendiri selama itoe pada Pari akan berdiri sendiri, dan mendirikan Republik Indonesia jang Proletarias. Sebab itoe teranglah agaknja bagi seloeroeh Proletaar di Indonesia, bahwa sewaktoe2 Partai Proletaar Indonesia kelak akan bekerdja bersama2 djoega dengan seloeroeh Partai Proletariaat di Doenia, jang Pari djoega mendapat kesempatan seloeas2nja oentoek mempertahankan dasar dan sikap sikapnja. Tegasnja Pari sebagai Partai Proletaar Revolutionair, djoega menoedjoe "Persaudaraan Kaoem Melarat Sedoenia" yakni menoedjoe "Internationale-Broederschap" djoega.

Kita bersama kawan kawan Djamaloeddin Tamin dan a. Tenek alias Daja Joesoef, ialah korban korban Pari jang ketiga kalinja di Digoelkan. Korban Pari jang pertama kali di

This letter implies that, in contrast to PKI, Pari made decisions according to local conditions, but with the common aspiration for “the Brotherhood of the World’s Poor” still very much in mind. This was the dream and goal that Pari held, and yet at the moment, Siregar acknowledged that Pari was facing serious problems. The letter acknowledges that many of its members had been captured, including one of founding members, Soebakat, had been apprehended in Bangkok in September 1929, sent back to Batavia where he had died in prison. Another founding member, Djamaloeddin Tamin was soon to be Digoelized along with Siregar and A. Tenek in late September 1933. The second letter ends rather abruptly after listing the names of Pari associates who were Digoelized. In closing, the writer notes that he has run out of time for providing any further details and the letter ends with no concluding remarks, no message for Pari supporters. While the letters might have left the audience with uncertainty, they at least successfully communicated a message that Pari really existed and would continue to work to realize the proletarian Republic of Indonesia.

The World of Espionage

While the letters in *Pewarta Deli* confirmed Pari’s existence, it offered only a brief history of its struggle. There was no mention of concrete projects that the party had undertaken or planned to achieve. The letters rather implied that the organization had been seriously damaged after the third wave of arrests of its members and that it

Digoelkan ialah kawan Maswar alias Oei Ah Thong jg soedah ketangkap di Singapore pada 9 Sept. 1928 dan di Digoelkan pada 1929.

Dan jang kedoea kalinja ialah kawan2 Mardjono, Soetedjo dan dengan enam kawannja jang soedah di Digoelkan pada 1931. Lain dari itoe korban jang selaloe djadi kenang kenangan Paristen ialah kematiannja kawan Soebakat dalam boel Glodok dengan tiada seadjalnja, ialah pada 5 Februari 1930, jang ditangkapnja di Siam (Bangkok) pada boelan September 1929.

Sekianlah hanja kesempatan kita:

Hormat kita

Mohd. Arif Siregar

dalam perdjalanen ke Boven Digoel

needed to reconsider its strategy. As an unclear future lay ahead for Pari, news media like *Pewarta Deli* also had to take a cautious approach in reporting on the organization or its legacy. Intriguingly, it did not stop its coverage of Pari, and instead beginning in 1934 kicked off a new campaign to establish Tan Malaka as a “legendary” hero, inserting snippets into its news coverage every now and then to remind readers of Tan Malaka.

The Indonesian public now takes pleasure in listening to sensational news, accepts and swallows them with joy. Such news are always added with extra stories, so that those who are ignorant and narrow-minded can grasp that the fate of Indonesia is in the leader’s hands. But now only Allah knows where he is!⁵⁴³

In February 1934, Matu Mona, an editor of *Pewarta Deli*, wrote about the excitement concerning news on Tan Malaka and about his heroic exploits for the future independence of Indonesia. On the occasion of the third major crackdown on Pari by PID and international intelligence agencies in 1932, copious news reporting on Pari and Tan Malaka detailed their clandestine activities. But as time went by, the news carried less and less concrete evidence, and focused more and more on reporting the rumors that were circulating in the region, which had the effect of implying that Tan Malaka’s mysterious adventures somehow continued. Once reported in the press, these rumors were consumed as “facts” that were nonetheless fascinating because, as one of the report says, “fact is stranger than fiction.”⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴³ “Takaran – pergerakan,” *Pewarta Deli*, February 17, 1934.

⁵⁴⁴ “Litjin Bagian Belut,” *ABAD XX*, Thn. 3, No. 7 (February 17, 1934), p. 70. This is a small notice about Tan Malaka (Tan Malacca). Reportedly, it is taken from *Java Bode* and reports that Tan Malaka plans to return to Singapore in order to reorganize Pari.

Coincidentally, after news on Tan Malaka decreased, news on espionage (*spionnage*) increased. It was a known fact that the British, French, Dutch, and American governments coordinated their surveillance against communist movements in the region. They did this with a common desire not to underestimate the potential threat of regional communist movements and could not predict in which part of colonies communist movement would (re)emerge. According to *Pewarta Deli*, international surveillance agencies were stationed in Moscow, Berlin, Canton, Shanghai, Singapore and among others; they were active wherever there was local communist connection. They believed that Comintern took initiatives in worldwide communist activities. But as I have described above, the readers of *Pewarta Deli* had already learned that this was not true, and that each country – China, Indonesia, Indochina and so on – had its own communist movement that was relatively independent. A 1934 article published in *Pewarta Deli*, “*Spionnage dienst di Timoer Djaoeh*” (“Espionage services in the Far East”), implies that anti-communist international espionage network would fail because its operation was based on wrong assumptions.⁵⁴⁵ The article contended that the Comintern did not initiate regional communist movements, and that regional leadership based on individual local conditions was effective.

Needless to say, accounts of regional and local espionage activities continued. Described in a 1935 story “based on the account of a former spy, ” secrets of the marine base in Singapore were said to have fallen into the hands of a German espionage unit.⁵⁴⁶ The domestic PID, too, was reported to have expanded its activity in Soerabaja.⁵⁴⁷ *Pewarta Deli* also featured legendary spies such as T. E. Lawrence or

⁵⁴⁵ “Spionnage dienst di Timoer Djaoeh,” *Pewarta Deli*, February 17, 1934.

⁵⁴⁶ “Pekerdjaan spionnage dan bagaimana rahsia marinebasis Singapore djatoeh ketangan spion Djerman: 20 tahoen jang lewat (Disalin dari karangan seorang bekas spion),” *Pewarta Deli*, February 5 and 6, 1935.

⁵⁴⁷ “Spionnage Dienst dan Spionnenberichten,” *Pewarta Deli*, May 16, 1935.

Lawrence of Arabia⁵⁴⁸ and Mata Hari.⁵⁴⁹ Its profile of Lawrence,⁵⁵⁰ a British Army officer who committed himself to the Arab Revolt of 1916 – 1918, appeared in a June 29, 1934 story, describing the man as a “modern romantic hero” (*pahlawan romantiek modern*), because he played three different roles as British Army officer, British spy, and the Arab Scarlet Pimpernel. Two and a half years later, a spy story appeared between November 3 and 8, 1937, as a serial by a writer identified as Aw. R. entitled “*Spionnage*.”⁵⁵¹

“*Patjar Merah Indonesia*” (Indonesian Scarlet Pimpernel) also made appearance in the Middle East. This time Cairo became the source of Tan Malaka’s secret mission. In April 1938 a rumor surfaced about the capture and subsequent escape of Tan Malaka at the hands of the British intelligent agency in Tehran.⁵⁵² In October 1938 “Tan Malaka’s right-hand man,” Alimin, reportedly passed away. His obituary revealed that he had been active in Palestine in the fight against the British.⁵⁵³ An article two months later, in December 1938, reported that Tan Malaka’s associates were said to have spent five days in Alexandria and three days in Cairo.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁴⁸ “Generaal Lawrence, Generaal dan Spion Inggeris, Patjar Merah Arab: Pahlawan Romantiek Modern (Dimelajoekan speciaal oentoeck Pe De oleh Ramona),” *Pewarta Deli*, June 29, 1934. This sequence appeared as a series of essay by Aw. R. entitled “Spionnage” in November 1937.

⁵⁴⁹ “Mata Hari” was the stage name of the Dutch exotic dancer and prostitute Gertrud Margarete Zele (1876-1917). She was a double agent for both France and Germany, and in 1917 arrested in Paris and executed by firing squad. Mata Hari had become synonymous with espionage that worked for Germany against France during World War I.

⁵⁵⁰ “Generaal Lawrence, Generaal dan Spion Inggeris, Patjar Merah Arab: Pahlawan Romantiek Modern (Dimelajoekan speciaal oentoeck Pe De oleh Ramona),” *Pewarta Deli*, June 29, 1934.

⁵⁵¹ Aw. R., “Spionnage,” *Pewarta Deli*, November 3, 6, 8, 1937.

⁵⁵² Muhamad Iskandar Ishaq, “President Partai Republik Indonesia tertangkap ditanah Iran,” *Pewarta Deli*, April 5, 1938.

⁵⁵³ Teungkoe Di Lamnjong, “Korban jang dimintak oleh tanah Palestina didalam sedjarah Indonesia, atau meninggalnja tangan kanan dari Patjar Merah Indonesia: Alimin meninggal doenia,” *Pewarta Deli*, October 19, 1938. Alimin had been Tan Malaka’s enemy since they disagreed on the plot of communist rebellion in Indonesia in 1926, but British and other intelligences appeared to share the belief that Tan Malaka and Alimin worked closely. Even in 1930 a report by Criminal Intelligence Department of Straits Settlements used the term “the Tan Malaka-Alimin gang.” Cheah Boon Kheng, *From PKI to the Comintern, 1924-1941: The Apprenticeship of the Malayan Communist Party* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1992), p. 56.

⁵⁵⁴ B. K. M, Perpindom, “Rol Patjar Merah Indonesia: Lima hari dengan SUN LANG TAN di Alexandrie, Tiga hari dengan M. Amin di Cairo,” *Pewarta Deli*, December 29, 1938.

The Patjar Merah series of popular novels began publication in 1938. An advertisement for the second book in the series, published in the same year, reads as follows:

Coming out soon!

Rol Patjar Merah Indonesia: Patjar Merah Indonesia Dibekoek [The Role of Patjar Merah: The Indonesian Scarlet Pimpernel Seized]

A book long-awaited by the public. Full of epic struggles. Composed by the well recognized MATU MONA.

Like other compositions by Matu Mona, this book is narrated with detailed inspiration, packed with mysterious affairs. The public must have been familiar with the book *Spionnage Dienst: Patjar Merah Indonesia* [Espionage Service: The Indonesian Scarlet Pimpernel], which upon release had shaken the general public in Indonesia, was praised by our intellectuals and last but not least by all prominent journalists in Indonesia. This book *Rol Patjar Merah Indonesia: Patjar Merah Indonesia Dibekoek* is a sequel to *Spionnage Dienst*. Composed even more neatly, thicker, more fascinating, using novel-type paper. Contents include among others: Person from Brussel, Magical Power, Darsonov to Spain, Where does Aliminsky Meditate, Patjar Merah in Palestine, The Pull of the Homeland, Musotte Heading to the Eastern Continent, Pan Malay Congress in India, Letters from Brussels, Breathing Homeland Air, Journey in the Caucasus, Patjar Merah cs. Seized in ...

Pre-publication price f1.14

Post-publication f1.75

Send order to “Centrale Courant”

Hakkastraat 31 – Medan

Post-publication order of more than 12 receives 20% discount and free shipping. Pre-publication order is fixed at f1.14 a copy.⁵⁵⁵

By 1938 a highly ambiguous line between fiction and reality had characterized Patjar Merah-related stories and guaranteed its popularity. It had been four years since *Pewarta Deli* begun reporting the “rumors” on Tan Malaka. The audience had already become accustomed to reading Patjar Merah as Tan Malaka, and now could recognize his presence in this emerging line of fiction. Since 1933 *Pewarta Deli* had added Tan Malaka’s picture to news related to him, so his face had become recognizable; now the audience could project his face onto the fictional hero in the Patjar Merah novels. In the novels, associations between the protagonist and Tan Malaka are scarcely obscured; in fact they are signaled, possibly for the extra thrill. At least five Patjar

⁵⁵⁵ An advertisement of *Rol Patjar Merah* in *Pewarta Deli* on October 12, 1938.

Bekal Terbit!

ROL PATJAR MERAH

[Patjar Merah Indonesia dibekoe]

Satoe boekoe jang soedah lama dinanti nantikan publik. Penoe perdjongan jang hebat-hebat. Terkarang oleh MATU MONA jang tidak asing lagi. Sebagai biasanja karang2an Matu Mona, demikianlah kitab ini digambarkan dengan penoe ispiratie, mengandoeng hal2 jang penoe mystrius. Publik tentoe soedah kenal kepada boekoe “Spionnage Dienst” (Patjar Merah Indonesia), jang baroe sadja terbit soedah menggemparkan kalangan publik di Indonesia, dipoe dji oleh segenap para terpeladjar kita, last but not least oleh segenap kaoem wartawan jg besar2 di Indonesia. Maka boekoe “Rol Patjar Merah Indonesia” (Patjar Merah Indonesia dibekoe) ini, ialah samboengan dari boekoe Spionnage Dienst tsb. Diatoer dengan lebih rapi, tebal, menarik, dengan kertas roman-papier. Antara lain2 isinja: Orang dari Brussel – Ilmoe gaib – Darsonov ke Spanjol – Dimana Alminsky bertapa – Patjar Merah di Palestina – Panggilan Tanah Air – Musotte menoe djoe benoea Timoer – Pan Malay Congres di India – Soerat2 dari Brussel – Mengejam Oedara Tanah Air – Melawat ke Kaukasus – Patjar Merah cs. Dibekoe di ...

Harga sebeloem terbit f 1.14

Sesoe dah terbit f 1.75

Pesanan ke “Centrale Courant”

Hakkastraat 31 – Medan

Ambil lebih dari 12 sesoe dah siap Korting 20 pCt ongkos kita tanggoeng.

Sebeloem siap harga tetap 1 ex 1.14.

Merah novels were written by two different authors between 1938 and 1940.⁵⁵⁶ They include the titles *Spionnage-Dienst* (Medan: Centrale Courant en Boekhandel, 1938), *Rol Patjar Merah Indonesia* (Medan: Centrale Courant en Boekhandel, 1938), and *Panggilan Tanah Air* (The Call of the Homeland; Medan: Tjerdas, 1940) by Matu Mona; *Moetiara Berloempoer, Tiga kali Patjar Merah datang membela* (Muddied Pearl, Three Times Patjar Merah Comes to Rescue; Medan: Tjerdas, 1940), and *Patjar Merah Kembali ke Tanah Air* (Patjar Merah, Homeland Bound; Medan: Tjerdas, 1940) by Yusdja. All of these novels were published as part of popular literary journals known as the dime novels, *roman pitjisan*.

Tan Malaka's adventures and underground activities were obviously entertaining to the audience. He had been engaged in the forbidden communist movement to fight imperialism; moreover, his goal was to establish an independent Republic of Indonesia. His cat-and-mouse game with the authorities had made the espionage world fascinating to the readers (especially in his native land Sumatra). Not only the Dutch PID, but also the international intelligence community had tried to capture him; and if we are to trust the reports/rumors, the authorities had succeeded on several occasions only to be outfoxed by him. Tan Malaka was a communist and also a nationalist. As *Pewarta Deli*'s chief editor Adi Negoro argued, nationalists could not be equated with criminals. Thus, with or without his intent, Tan Malaka became a hero and leader of the Indonesian nationalist movement, at least in the mind of his admirers in Sumatra. The popularity of Tan Malaka went hand-in-hand with the popularity of popular literary journals. They fed off each other.

Islamic Journals

⁵⁵⁶ For the best analysis of Patjar Merah series, see Oshikawa, "Patjar Merah Indonesia and Tan Malaka: A Popular Novel and a Revolutionary Legend."

Around the time when reports on Pari decreased in *Pewart Deli*, Medan saw the rise of Islamic journals. These journals contained Islamic teachings, advice on how to be Muslim in the contemporary world, and information about contemporary affairs in the world and Islamic community.

Table 8-5: Journals and Publishers in Medan

Journal	Publisher (Editors)
<i>Dewan Islam</i>	Badan Penerbit Dewan Islam (M. Arsjad Th. Loebis)
<i>Soeloeh Islam</i>	Komite kesadaran Islam (Hamka)
<i>Pandji Islam</i>	Poestaka Islam (Hamka, Zainal Abidin Ahmad)
<i>Pedoman Masjarakat</i>	Mij Soematra (Hamka)
<i>Tjahaja Islam</i>	s.n.
<i>Tafsir Alquranoelkarim</i>	Islamijah
<i>Pedoman Islam</i>	Badan As Sjoera (Hamka)
<i>Poernama</i>	Poestaka Islam (M. Saleh Oemar)

Starting in 1934, eight new Islamic journals were established in the period of six years; and new Islamic journals came out almost every year. Overall, among the twenty-five journals published in the 1930s in Medan, one-third of them were Islamic. They were, in chronological order, *Dewan Islam* (Islamic Council, 1934), *Soeloeh Islam* (The Torch of Islam, 1934), *Pandji Islam* (Banner of Islam, 1934-1942), *Pedoman Masjarakat* (Community Guidance, 1935-1941), *Tjahaja Islam* (Light of Islam, 1936), *Tafsir Alquranoelkarim* (Interpretations of Holy Quran, 1937), *Pedoman Islam* (Islamic Guidance, 1939), and *Poernama* (Full Moon, 1940).

One institution that played a key role in the flourishing of Islamic journals in Medan is the Islamic organization Moehammadijah. The Moehammadijah movement took hold in Sumatra after the communist revolts in 1927 failed. Established in Jogjakarta in 1912, initially the Moehammadijah movement sought to promote Islamic reformist teachings, to disseminate Islamic publications, as well as to establish schools

and hospitals in order to promote social welfare in the Islamic community. Its activities were concentrated mainly in Java in the 1910s and 1920s, and failed to attract people's interest in Sumatra. In West Sumatra, the Thawalib Schools with strong anti-colonial sentiment were dominant in the Muslim community. But the socio-political circumstances changed in 1927. Taking Tan Malaka's advice before the uprising, many Muslim communists in West Sumatra relocated to Medan and other places.⁵⁵⁷ The tightening colonial surveillance in West Sumatra after the uprising was another factor in this migration, as many former communists and radical Muslims fled to Medan. To this effect *De Locomotief*, a Semarang-based Dutch newspaper, even warned the Indies government that "in East Sumatra now there are many communists!"⁵⁵⁸ These political refugees however did not continue with their organizational politics, but rather looked for political shelter under the Moehammadijah.⁵⁵⁹ Since the organization was not yet rooted in Medan, these newcomers eventually took it over.

Taking over Moehammadijah was strategically important to spreading "modernist" Islamic thoughts beyond Java and penetrating into the North, South and East Coasts of Sumatra, South Borneo and South Sulawesi in the 1930s. In 1935 the Moehammadijah increased its branches and groups to 809, in 1937 to 921, in 1939 to 1,100, and in 1942 to 1,275. In 1937 it had a total membership of 112,850.⁵⁶⁰ The organizational growth of the Moehammadijah led to the significant development of its activities in social, educational, and religious activities. As part of its religious "education," the Moehammadijah encouraged the publication of Islamic journals in

⁵⁵⁷ Kahin, *Rebellion to Integration*, pp. 49-57.

⁵⁵⁸ "Di Soematera Timoer banyak komunisme!: Karena itoe pemerintah haroes awas!, kata Locomotief," *Pewarta Deli*, September 10, 1928.

⁵⁵⁹ Kahin, "Repression and Regroupment."

⁵⁶⁰ Alfian, *Muhammadiyah: The Political Behavior of a Muslim Modernist Organization under Dutch Colonialism* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1989).

Sumatra as well as the Indies in general. Through its activities it carried reformist ideas, that by returning to the true orthodoxy of the Faith, Muslims would be able to gain novel and fresh interpretation of Muslim teachings, thus making the religion answerable to the ever-changing problems of the contemporary “modern” world. Moehammadijah contributed substantially to the process of socializing “Indonesian” Muslims towards acceptance of the truth of the religion as their new value system or political ideology. But it should be noted that Moehammadijah would not have been as successful if Minangkabau Islamic leftist activists were not forced to regroup after the failed uprising in West Sumatra.

Hamka or Hadji Abdoel Malik Karim Amrullah was the key figure behind the growing popularity of making Islamic journals in Medan. Hamka edited or led four out of the region’s eight Islamic journals, i.e. *Soeloeh Islam*, *Pandji Islam*, *Pedoman Masyarakat*, and *Pedoman Islam*. He was a leader of the Islamic reformist movement and brought a new breed of writers to the Islamic publications in Medan. Born on 16 February 1908 in Manindjau, West Sumatra, Hamka did not attend high school, either secular or religious.⁵⁶¹ He only attended the village school for three years and religious schools in Padang Pandjang and Parabek (near Bukittinggi) for nearly three years. Coming from five generations of an *ulama* (Muslim legal scholar) family, Hamka had a gift for language and mastered Dutch, Malay and Arabic. He appears to have inherited the talent to write from his father, Hadji Abdoel Karim Amroellah, who was known as Hadji Rasoel and one of the founders of the modernist Muslim movement in the Indies. Hadji Rasoel founded the Sumatra Thawalib Schools, where people discussed Islamic principles along with ideas of socialism and communism. Sumatra Thawalib and Dinijjah schools played a significant role in the years leading

⁵⁶¹ Nasir Tamara, Buntaran Sanusi, Vincent Djauhari (eds.), *HAMKA di mata hati umat* (Jakarta: Penerbit Sinar Harapan, 1983).

up to 1933, and after the repression in 1933 they became a major locus of nationalist activities. The government's failure in its efforts to gain control over private educational institutions through the Teachers' Ordinance and the Wild School Ordinance⁵⁶² meant that even after the suppression of political party activities "thousands of national schools ... kept alive and promoted the national ideals for which these parties had stood," because these "schools were thoroughly politicized."⁵⁶³

In 1924, at the age of seventeen, Hamka joined Moehammadijah in Jogjakarta and SI in Pekalongan. By 1930, Hamka had traveled to Java as well as to Mecca, South Celebes, and North Sumatra. It was not unusual for an Islamic scholar to move easily from one Muslim community to another without experiencing any discrimination. In South Celebes, he spent about four years as a *muballigh* (propagandist) of Moehammadijah. This experience broadened his worldview and enhanced his sense of solidarity with people from all over the Indies. In 1936 he moved to and settled down in Medan as the chief editor of the weekly *Pedoman Masjarakat*, *Pandji Islam*, and other literary journals.

Pandji Islam was one of the most popular Islamic journals, printed by Sjarikat Tapanoeli and published three times a month. Its agents covered many major cities in Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and Celebes. Its subtitle reads "Journal of Popular Islamic Science" (*Madjallah Wetenschap Islam Popoeler*). Zainal Abidin Ahmad, Hamka, and Mohammad Natsir were editors of the journal. It had fifteen regular contributors, including Dr. Aboe Hanifah, M. Din Yatim, Dr. Nainggolan Oranje, Adi Negoro, Asnawi Hadisiswaja, Fachroeddin Hs., A. Hasjmy, Sjamsoe Hadiwijata, Soegondo

⁵⁶² The Wild School Ordinance required all the teachers to have license issued by the government. Its intention was to control private schools unsubsidized by the government. Tsuchiya, *Democracy and Leadership*, p. 179.

⁵⁶³ Kahin, *Rebellion to Integration*, p. 79.

Kartoprodjo, A. Damhoeri, A. Hamid Loebis, Digoel 'Oemar 'Oesman, Drs. Ahmad Ramail, and two regular female contributors – Rasoena Said and Fathimah Hasjim. All of these were also known as regular contributors for popular literary journals in Medan and West Sumatra.

Known as an Islamic thinker and educator Mohammad Natsir was a key editor and regular contributor. Born on July 17, 1908 in the religious and agriculturally prosperous area of Alahan Pandjang, West Sumatra,⁵⁶⁴ he entered the HIS in Solok, while attending the Sumatra Thawalib School directed by a follower of Hadji Rasael. Then he attended the MULO (1923-1927) and the AMS in Bandoeng (1927-1930). There he joined the modernist United Islam (*Persatoean Islam*), where he attended classes by the influential Islamic teacher (*ulama*) Ahmad Hassan,⁵⁶⁵ and in 1929 he became member of the Association of Young Muslims (*Jong Islamieten Bond*) founded by Hadji Agus Salim. Three years later in 1932 Natsir founded Islamic Education (*Pendidikan Islam*), which had primary and secondary schools as well as a teachers' training school.

Natsir saw Islam as a social and political system. This understanding of Islam was expressed in an important term that he coined, "*Kebangsaan Muslimin*" ("Muslim nation"), which he introduced in an article entitled "*Indonesisch Nationalisme*" (Indonesian Nationalism) published in *Pembela Islam* (Defender of Islam). The concept of "Muslim nation" prioritized Islamic principles and solidarity and took

⁵⁶⁴ George McT. Kahin, "In Memoriam: Mohammad Natsir (1907-1993)," *Indonesia*, No. 56 (1993), pp. 159-165; Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1942* (London and Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 279-295.

⁵⁶⁵ Ahmad Hassan was born in 1887 in Singapore, the son of a Tamil scholar and a Javanese mother. He was the chief figure in the Persatoean Islam established in 1923 in Bandoeng. Howard M. Federspiel, *Persatuan Islam: Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Indonesia* (Ithaca: Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University, 1970).

exception to territorially defined secular identity.⁵⁶⁶ This idea was fully expanded in his book *Cultuur Islam (Islamic Culture)* in 1936.⁵⁶⁷

But in his 1939 book entitled *Dengan Islam ke Indonesia Moelia* (Towards Glorious Indonesia With Islam), Natsir's opinion shifted to a positive recognition of territorially defined Indonesian state. In a polemical discussion on nationalism with Soekarno that took place in *Pandji Islam* in 1939 and 1940, his view on nationalism was further revealed.⁵⁶⁸ Responding to Soekarno's secular understanding of nationalism, Natsir wrote a series of articles in 1940 to argue that Muslims needed to accept modern concepts such as nationalism, which required an inclusive attitude in order to catch up with the challenges of modernity. In his opinion, Muslims lagged behind modernity because they still abided by conventional views unquestioningly, and the time had come for them to practice *ijtihad* (reasoning). *Ijtihad* is a terminology in the Islamic law for the process of making a legal decision independently from the Qur'an.⁵⁶⁹

With this argument, Natsir opened the way for Muslim intellectuals to (re)interpret and apply modern (Western) concepts for the sake of establishing the Indonesian nation. This view has been described as novel compared to other Islamic leaders of the time who looked down on secular nationalists because they were considered less Islamic.⁵⁷⁰ Natsir's version of nationalism was new and radical in the sense that it criticized conservative Muslim attitudes towards social change and encouraged instead the adoption of secular ideas. In short, he adjusted his old

⁵⁶⁶ Mohammad Natsir, "Indonesisch Nationalisme," *Pembela Islam*, No. 36 (October 1931), mentioned in Yudi Latif, *Indonesian Muslim Intelligentsia and Power* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), p. 209.

⁵⁶⁷ Mohammad Natsir, *Cultuur Islam* (Bandoeng: Pendidikan Islam, 1936). The advertisement of the book was found in all Islamic journals in Medan as well as *Pewarta Deli* in 1936 and 1937.

⁵⁶⁸ On this polemic see Hering, *Soekarno*, pp. 262-264.

⁵⁶⁹ Mohammad Natsir, *Capita Selecta* (Bandung: W. van Hoeve, 1954).

⁵⁷⁰ Luthfi Assyauckanie, *Islam and the Secular State in Indonesia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), pp. 44-46.

aspiration for a Muslim nation in order to conform to the needs of the future Indonesian state, which might take a secular form.

This understanding of nationalism and Muslim nation were reflected in modernist journals such as *Pandji Islam*, *Soeloeh Islam*, and others. On the one hand, these journals regularly reported on international affairs and paid special attention to issues of the Islamic world. On the other, they also attended to the mainstream nationalist movement and published special commemorative editions when leading Indonesian nationalist politicians, such as Dr. Soetomo and Thamrin, passed away. Exiled nationalist leaders such as Hatta and Soekarno contributed articles on various matters to those journals. By bringing together nationalism and Islamism, they promoted Natsir's version of Muslim nationalism in Indonesia.

Roman pitjisan

In the late 1930s, an Indonesian version of the dime novel emerged in Sumatra and gained popularity. As early as 1939, Adi Negoro described this popular literary form as “*roman pitjisan*.”⁵⁷¹ It was also called “*roman Medan*” (Medan literature) after the city that eventually became the center of this type of literature. *Roman pitjisan* were generally published in full or in serialized form in literary journals by private publishers that were subsidized by indigenous Indonesians who entered the commercial publishing business in the 1930s.⁵⁷² These journals represented a largely commercial mass publication of cheap books and were open to a broad readership.

⁵⁷¹ As far as I know, Adi Negoro was the first person that used the word “*roman pitjisan*” to describe the new phenomena in the printed culture. *Pewarta Deli*, (December 16, 1939). “*Roman pitjisan*” literally means “dime novels.” The term *pitjisan* came from “*pitjis*” that was the “large quantities of low-denomination Chinese copper” since the late twelfth century, and its use spread from Java to Celebes, Borneo, and Sumatra. Robert Cribb and Audrey Kahin (eds.), *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia* (2nd ed.), (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2004), pp. 101-102.

⁵⁷² Oshikawa, “Patjar Merah Indonesia and Tan Malaka”; Faizah Soenoto, “Tinjauan Bahasa Roman Indonesia Sebelum Perang,” *Archipel*, No. 20, 1980.

Some contemporary writers in 1939 even characterized the period as “*bandjir roman*” (flood of novels).⁵⁷³ This new type of novel was significant in terms of its literary form and popularity in certain regions. And the fact that colonial authorities did not consider these novels to be politically dangerous or conducive to radicalism contributed to their fast rising popularity.

Table 8-6: List of *Roman Pitjisan* Journals

City	Journals (year of publication, publisher, printer, editor)
Padang	<i>Roman Indonesia</i> (1934-40), Surya
Fort de Kock	<i>Roman Pergaoelan</i> (1939-41, Boekhandel & Uitgeverij “Penjiaran Ilmoe”; Tamar Djaja)
	<i>Perdjoeangan Ilmoe</i> , <i>Perdjoeangan Hidoep</i>
Benkoelen	<i>Roda Penghidoepan</i> (1937-38, Druk. Tjam; Typ. Drukkerij “Dempo,” M. Sabirin)
Medan	<i>Doenia Pengalaman</i> (1938-41, Boekhandel “Poestaka Islam,” Sjarikat Tapanoeli; A. M. Pamoentjak, A. Diningrat)
	<i>Loekisan Poedjangga</i> (1939-42, Boekh. “Tjerdas”; Joesoef Sou’yb)
	<i>Doenia Pergerakan</i> (1940)
	<i>Loekisan Doenia</i> (1940)
Gorontalo	<i>Perdjoeangan Batin</i> , <i>Mizaan Doenia</i> (1941)
Soerakarta	<i>Doenia Pergerakan</i> , <i>Doenia Pengalaman</i>

Roman pitjisan were designed to be easy, entertaining reading. These journals appeared once or twice a month, each time containing one 75 to 80-page novel, and sometimes one or two short stories to fill up the extra pages. The novels were original (as opposed to being translations or adaptations), written by Indonesians, and consisted of spy stories, detective stories, historical and political novels, and romance stories.⁵⁷⁴ The journals were sold by subscription, and publishers encouraged letters

⁵⁷³ A. S. Hamid, “Bandjir Roman,” *Pedoman Masjarakat*, 5-49 (6 Dec. 1939); Joesoef Sou’yb, “Bandjir Roman,” *Pedoman Masjarakat*, 5-50 (13 Dec. 1939); *Pandji Islam*, (1940), pp. 7801-7802.

⁵⁷⁴ Oshikawa, “Patjar Merah Indonesia and Tan Malaka,” p. 128; C. W. Watson, “The Sociology of the Indonesian Novel, 1920-1955,” (M.A. thesis, University of Hull, 1971), p. 141; Eduard J. J. M.

and contributions from readers.⁵⁷⁵ Each journal had ten to twenty-five very productive writers.

This style of publishing book-length prose in the form of monthly literary journals was not new in colonial Indonesia. From the middle of the 1920s, *peranakan* had published popular novels as “monthly stories” (*tjerita boelanan*) with Soerabaja, Malang, Batavia, and Bandoeng emerging as centers of such publication. The journals were inexpensive, in pocket-size book form, and approximately 100 pages in length for each edition. They were widely popular, read not only by the Chinese but also by indigenous readers. Even in heavily Islamic regions like West Sumatra, people enjoyed reading these publications.⁵⁷⁶ A key element in their popularity was the language. Use of the colloquial Malay language as spoken in urban settings made the publications easy to read and accessible to people of various ethnic groups. But in terms of content, the publications were overwhelmingly oriented to a Chinese readership. It was this element that definitely impelled Muslim authors to produce their own literary journals, thus the *roman pitjisan*.

In the period of four years, there emerged at least twelve *roman pitjisan* journals and in the span of only four or five years, more than 400 *roman pitjisan* were published.⁵⁷⁷ *Doenia Pengalaman* (World of Experience, Medan), *Loekisan Poedjangga* (Portrait of Writers, Medan), *Tjendrawasih* (Bird of Paradise, Medan), *Doenia Pergerakan* (World of Movement, Medan), *Roman Indonesia* (Indonesian Novels, Padang), *Roman Pergaoelan* (Social Novels, Fort de Kock) were popular

Kimman, *Indonesian Publishing: Economic Organizations in a Langganan Society* (Hollandia: Baarn, 1981), p. 98.

⁵⁷⁵ Kimman, *Indonesian Publishing*.

⁵⁷⁶ Interview with Audrey Kahin on January 10, 2010. See also Yamamoto Nobuto, “The Chinese Connection: Rewriting Journalism and Categories in Indonesian History,” in Peter Post, Marleen Dieleman, and Juliette Koning (eds.), *Chinese Indonesians and Regime Change* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

⁵⁷⁷ Jakob Sumarjo, *Novel Populer Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Nur Cabaya, 1982), p. 14.

roman pitjisan in the late 1930s. Benkoelen's *Roda Penghidoepan* (The Wheel of Life) is also worth mentioning.⁵⁷⁸ Outside Sumatra, the urban centers of Soerakarta and Gorontalo on Java also produced *roman pitjisan* journals. Gorontalo had *Perdjoeangan Batin* (Inner Struggle) and *Mizaan Doenia* (World Discernment). The two journals published in Soerakarta, *Doenia Pergerakan* and *Doenia Pengalaman*, shared the same names as those produced in Medan. It is possible that they were sister publications, but no supporting evidence is available to confirm this. In the case of Gorontalo, in July 1941 the publisher Mizaan Doenia launched its literary journal. The first book was written by Ibrahim B. A., the director of the publisher, entitled *Rahasia Kaloeng Berliant: Satoe impian dalam Kapal Perang* (Mystery of Diamond Neckrace: Dream on A Warship), and the next issue was S. Hassan, *Achirnja ... Bertemoe Djoea* (Finally ... We Met).⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁸ Sumarjo, *Novel Populer Indonesia*, p. 14. *Roda Penghidoepan* from Benkoelen should not be counted as a part of Medan literature. In its inaugural issue, the chief editor Mhd. Sabirin expresses that they intend to publish novels in the ordinary Malay language (*bahasa Melajoe biasa*), which is not Betawi Chinese Malay (*bahasa Melajoe Tiong Hoa Betawi*) that was widely consumed in the Indies. He wishes to get attention from our people (*bangsa kita*). Mhd. Sabirin, "Sepatan Kata," *Roda Penghidoepan*, Thn. 1, No. 5 (May 1937). Sabirin shared the idea of providing popular reading materials in ordinary Malay, but it appears not to have a clear political mission to combine nationalism and Islamism that Adi Negoro group had demonstrated.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibrahim B.A., *Rahasia Kaloeng Berliant: Satoe impian dalam Kapal Perang* (Gorontalo: Mizaan Doenia, 1941); S. Hassan, *Achirnja ... Bertemoe Djoea* (Gorontalo: Mizaan Doenia, 1941). As for the two literary journals in Gorontalo, H. B. Jassin appeared to have some influences on them, because they began to be published after Jassin stationed there for the period of half a year. He was known as a literary critique and writer. Born on July 13, 1917 in Gorontalo, he studied at the Dutch Native School (HIS) in Balikpapan, East Borneo, then at the Advanced Primary Education (MULO) in Tondano, North Celebes, and at the Dutch High School (Hogere Burger School, HBS) in Pangkalan Brandan, North Sumatra. Jassin moved many times in his adolescent years because of his father's occupation, but the move to Sumatra brought him closer to one center of the Indonesian literary movement. When he studied in Pangkalan Brandan from 1932 to 1939, he read popular journals and newspapers published in Medan such as *ABAD XX*, *Pandji Islam*, *Pedoman Masyarakat*, and the emerging *roman pitjisan* journals. Because Pangkalan Brandan was only 100 kilometers away from Medan, Jassin was able to go to Medan rather frequently and met Adi Negoro. While he worked for *Pewarta Deli* as translator, he also contributed several articles for journals. Upon his graduation from HBS in 1939, he went back to Gorontalo for several months and worked as assistant at the office of the local Assistant Resident. In the period of five months, it appears that Jassin found friends who were interested in publishing short-lived popular journals. Then in February 1940, he took a job at Balai Poestaka, the state bureau for popular literature, where he worked with many prominent Indonesian writers (many of whom originated from Sumatra) such as Sutan Takdir Alisjabana, Armijn Pané, Sanoesi Pané, Nur Sutan Iskandar, and Aman Datuk Madjoindo, as well as regular contributors to Balai Poestaka such as

However, existing studies on *roman pitjisan*, which tend towards content analysis, fail to understand the process that gave rise to this literary form.⁵⁸⁰ The phenomenon of *roman pitjisan* should be contextualized in the political situation that prevailed in Medan in the 1930s. Adi Negoro and his colleagues had been successful in marketing popular literary and Islamic journals since the early 1930s. Following this tradition, *roman pitjisan* plots generally focused on contemporary issues and were set in the new urban milieu; they avoided descriptions of supernatural power or actions exceeding human capability.⁵⁸¹ One of the characteristics of *roman pitjisan* is, as literary scholar Noriaki Oshikawa describes, that they manifest the concrete realities of politics through their fictional portrayals, with satirical twists involving spies and secret police and the nationalist's loves, friendships, and betrayals. In *roman pitjisan*, he continues, "politics" means trickery and disguise, evasion of enemy, the transportation of secret documents, defamation and slander, separation and escape, and finally rescue.⁵⁸² This kind of "politics" reflected the political reality in the 1930s Indies; literature, rumor, and news reports fed off each other and came to constitute "politics."

Against this backdrop, the ultimate goal of Medan literature was to promote an Indonesian national language based on the colloquial Malay. In addition, its nationalistic, Islamic, and entertaining content gained popularity among the audience. These elements seem to have resonated among the ordinary readers. *Roman pitjisan* were able to combine them within the journal form, in a language accessible by the

the illustrious poet Chairil Anwar and journalist Rosihan Anwar. "Biography of Hans Bague Jassin," The 1987 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service, available at <http://www.Rmaf.org.ph/Awardees/Biography/BiographyJassinHan.htm> (accessed on March 1, 2010); H. B. Jassin, Sapardi Djoko Damono, *H. B. Jassin 70 Tahun: Kumpulan Karangan* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1987).

⁵⁸⁰ "Patjar Merah Indonesia and Tan Malaka", Doris Jedamski, "The Vanishing-Act of Sherlock Holmes in Indonesia's National Awakening," in Doris Jedamski (ed.), *Chewing Over the West: Occidental Narratives in Non-Western Readings* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 349-379.

⁵⁸¹ Hamka, "Mengarang Roman," *Pedoman Masjarakat*, 4-51 (December 21, 1938), pp. 1033-1034.

⁵⁸² Oshikawa, "Patjar Merah Indonesia and Tan Malaka," p. 20.

general public. The publishers and writers of this literature often overlapped with those of literary and Islamic journals. They were mostly Islamic nationalists, some of whom called for the creation of an “Indonesian Library” (*Perpoestakaan Indonesia*). Both Tamar Djaja, the editor and contributor of *Roman Pergaoelan*, and A. Pamoentjak, another popular writer, emphasized the importance of “enriching the library of our nation/Indonesia” (*memperkaja perpoestakaan bangsa kita/Indonesia*), and declared in the first issue of *Roman Pergaoelan* that the journal’s publication would certainly contribute to it.⁵⁸³ The publishers also printed books written by well-known nationalist politicians, in some cases during exile. For instance, *Penjiaran Ilmoe* published Soekarno’s *Soerat-Soerat Islam dari Ende* (Muslim Letters from Ende), Mohamad Hatta’s *Mentjari Volkenbond dari Abad ke Abad* (Searching for the League of Nations over the Centuries), and so on. Their publications included books on Islam such as Natsir’s *Cultuur Islam* (Islamic Culture), and others by *roman pitjisan* writers such as Hamka’s *Dibawah Lindungan Ka’bah* (Under the Protection of Ka’bah) and *Tenggelamnja Kapal van der Wijck* (The Sinking of the *Van der Wijck*), and Matu Mona’s *Panggilan Tanah Air* (The Call of the Homeland). As I have mentioned above, this mixture of nationalism and Islamism was a principal characteristic of *roman pitjisan* or the so-called Medan literature.

Doenia Pengalaman

A better understanding of *roman pitjisan* is possible with a close look at *Doenia Pengalaman*, one of the most popular *roman pitjisan* journals published in Medan. Publication of this journal started in October 1938 with the subtitle “*madjallah roman-detective popoeler*” (popular journal of detective novels). It was edited by Joesoef Sou’yb, S. Djarens, Matu Mona, and Muchtar Nasution (Emnast),

⁵⁸³ *Roman Pergaoelan*, 1-1 (June 1, 1938), pp. 3-5.

under the leadership of A. M. Pamoentjak and A. Diningrat, published by Boekhandel Poestaka Islam, and printed by Sjarikat Tapanoeli. Popular writers like Or. Mandank, Hamka, Soeman Hs., and Selasih were among its regular contributors. These writers usually contributed their works to each other's literary journals; some even produced short novels every month. From 1938 to 1941, for instance, Joesoef Sou'yb, the editor-in-chief of *Loekisan Poedjangga*, published more than 50 novels, Matu Mona more than 20 novels, and Tamar Djaja, the chief editor of *Roman Pergaoelan*, more than a dozen.

Table 8-7: Journal *Doenia Pengalaman* (I-1 [Oct. 38] -- III-5 [May 40])

A. Damhoeri	Azimat Toea Dari Abad 17 (Topeng Hitam)	I-1 (Oct. 38)
Joesoef Sou'yb	Ratjoen Nicotine atau Pembalasan Dendam Chasoemat	I-1
Joesoef Sou'yb	Elang Emas Ketawa	I-2 (Nov. 38)
A. Damhoeri	Depok, Anak Pagai (Lamoenan Ombak di Pantai Poelau2 Mentawai)	I-2
Joesoef Sou'yb	Pengepoengan Kota Bondjol	I-3 (Dec. 38)
Jahjaniah	Boeaja Deli Disergap Matjan Singapore	I-3
S. Djarens	Terlambat	I-3
A. Damhoeri	Hantoe Laoet di Selat Malaka	II-1 (15-1-39)
S. Djarens	Dokter Pentjoeri Majat (Kegelisahan Dr. Zin)	II-2 (30-1-39)
A. Damhoeri	Majapada	II-3 (15-2-39)
Joesoef Sou'yb	Keringkasan Riwayat Hidoepkoe	II-3
* Aria Diningrat	Rahsia Kaloeng Moetiara	II-4
* Si Oema	Pemboenoeh Dr. Wolf Gloucer	II-5
* Sahiboel Hikajat	Membalaskan Dendam	II-6
* A. Damhoeri	Pahlawan Padang Pasir	II-7
* Soeman Hs	Teboesan Darah	II-8
* Musra Sjahboeddin	Maga Borala	II-8
* S. Djarens	Sidjoendai	II-9
* A. Damhoeri	Hoeloebalang Teukoe Oemar	II-10
Joesoef Sou'yb	Memikat Elang Emas	II-11 (14-6-39)
Inangda	Timboenan Majat di Abad ke 17	II-12 (24-6-39)

Table 8-7 (Continued)		
Musra Sjahboeddin Raihulamar	Naga Borala (Gadis Disarang Penjamoen)	II-12
Joesoef Sou'yb	Perdjoeangan di Bandar Malaka	II-13 (5-7-39)
Joesoef Sou'yb	Pengorbanan di Medan Perang (Oentoek memperingati Perang Tiongkok-Djepang)	II-14 (15-7-39)
A. Damhoeri	Pertanda	II-15 (5-8-39)
Joesoef Sou'yb	Elang Emas	II-16 (15-8-39)
Mhd. Hassan Tansa	Hantoe Koeboer ...!	II-17 (5-9-39)
* II-18		
Joesoef Sou'yb	Elang Emas di Pagar Roejoeng	II-19 (5-10-39)
Joesoef Sou'yb	Rahsia Pengoeckir Patoeng	II-20 (15-10-39)
S. Djarens	Dr. Zin, Manoesia Kedjam	II-21 (25-10-39)
Joesoef Sou'yb	Spionnage dalam Perang Doenia Kedoea	II-22 (5-11-39)
Joesoef Sou'yb	Siapa Pemboenoehnja??	II-23 (15-11-39)
S. Djarens	Taboet	II-24 (25-11-39)
Emnast	Pembalasan	II-25 (5-12-39)
Matu Mona	Detectief Rindu (Tjintjin berlian dari Golconda)	II-26 (15-12-39)
Surapati	Tanda Tangan Palsoe	II-27 (25-12-39)
S. Djarens	Elba	III-1 (5-1-40)
* III-3		
* III-4		
Si Oema	Darah Perwira	III-5 (15-2-40)
* S. Djarens	Mr. Chan	III-6 (25-2-40)
* Surapati	Letoesan Bom di Solo	III-7 (5-3-40)
Katja Mata	Palang Merah	III-8 (15-3-40)
Enmast	Tan Malaka di Medan	III-9 (25-3-40)
* Synoe and Thomas	Toekang Keboen Rahasia	III-10 (5-4-40)
Si Oema	Pemboenoeh Jang Ta' Bersalah	III-11 (15-4-40)
* III-12		
S. Oesmany	Dr. Chung	III-13 (5-5-40)
A. Samad dan N. Soetan	Meninggalkan Palang Salib	III-14 (15-5-40)
S. Oesmay	Mr. Bacht	III-15 (25-5-40)

[*: missing from the National Library of Indonesia]

As with the Chinese-Malay journals in Java, there is ethnic bias in terms of authors contributing to *Doenia Pengalaman*. Looking at the list of authors above, one notes the presence of both Minang and non-Minang writers, yet the Minangkabau representation is undoubtedly the greater. The journal's major contributors, such as Damhoeri, Sou'yb, Jahjaniah, Sahiboel, and Musra Sjahboeddin, were ethnic Minangkabau,⁵⁸⁴ and Minangkabau writers accounted for the compositions in nearly half of *Doenia Pengalaman*'s issues. The most regular contributors over the four-year period from 1938 to 1941 included Sou'yb, whose writings appeared twelve times, and Damhoeri, who appeared five times. However, some non-Minang writers were also represented, such as Emnast, who was Mandailing Batak from South Tapanoeli, and Djarens whose ethnic origin was also not Minang and who appeared seven times in *Doenia Pengalaman* between the years 1938 and 1941. Still, all in all, Minangkabau writers were the much more frequent contributors to *Doenia Pengalaman* and exerted heavy influence over the publication.

Doenia Pengalaman appeared once a month in 1938, twice a month in the first half of 1939, and then three times a month from July 1939 to the end of 1941. For each issue, 3,000 copies were printed, and normally all the copies were sold out in a few months. The subscription was 25 cents a month from 1938 to June 1939, and then was raised to 50 cents a month. The daily newspaper subscription rate was something like 75 cents to 1 guilder per month, so it was not very expensive, at least for the middle class Indonesian reading public.

Agents or "propagandists" of *Doenia Pengalaman* reached across Soerabaja, Jogjakarta, Soerakarta, Tjirebon, Samarinda, Bandjarmasin, Amuntai, Kandangan, and Martapura, and naturally in many cities in Sumatra including Padang Sidempuan,

⁵⁸⁴ Minangkabau and Mandailing Batak were the main writers of original works published by Balai Poestaka since 1920s.

Bindjai, Pajakumbuh, Sawah Lunto, Padang, Fort de Kock, Kota Radja, and Langsa. Thus its readership extended not only to Medan and cities in West Sumatra, but also through Central and East Java and South Borneo.

The pattern of expansion of *roman pitjisan* has three distinctive characteristics. First, it spread in the Indies from Medan to other cities in Sumatra as well as to Java and Borneo. This course contradicted the information and cultural flow in the Indies, which usually started from Batavia, the administrative center of the Indies government. In this case, it was Medan that introduced this uniquely Indonesian popular literary journal in vernacular Malay to the rest of the Indies. The literary style of the *roman pitjisan*, however, borrowed from the *peranakan* Chinese literary journals that originated in Java since the 1920s and circulated widely throughout the Indies.

A second notable characteristic of this literary form's expansion across the Indies was the geographic overlap between areas where *roman pitjisan* thrived and those where Islamic modernism, especially the Moehammadijah movement, was quite active. To understand how *roman pitjisan* spread, it is important to consider the commercial centers in the 1930s, which were Medan and Soerabaja. In terms of commerce, trade and administration, Medan was the center of the East Coast of Sumatra as well as Sumatra as a whole. Both Central and East Java and such outer islands as South Borneo and Celebes belonged to the Soerabaja's economic bloc.

Thirdly Minangkabau merchants and traders who supported Islamic modernism were quite active in these areas, too. It can be assumed, therefore, that *roman pitjisan* spread through Moehammadijah's networks and the Minangkabau's commercial networks. This link is most clearly evident in the financial connections that existed between publishers and printers of *roman pitjisan* and the Minangkabau merchants, entrepreneurs, and financiers who funded them.

The publisher of *Doenia Pengalaman*, Poestaka Islam, was one of the leading publishers in Medan along with Mij. Sumatrasche Drukkerij, and had much to do with the Moehammadijah movement. Besides *Doenia Pengalaman*, it published the weekly *Pandji Islam* (1934-1942) edited by Hamka and the monthly journal *Poernama* (1940-1942) edited by M. S. Oemar. From 1940 on, *Pandji Islam* carried articles on Islam by Soekarno, who joined Moehammadijah in 1938 and became a “pious” Muslim during his exile on the island of Ende. It also published many books on Islam and politics, such as Soekarno’s *Indonesia Menggugat* (Indonesia Acusses), Dr. Soetomo’s autobiography *Riwayat Penghidoepan Dr. Soetomo dan Perdjoearannja* (Autobiography of Dr. Soetomo and His Struggle, by Abd. Wahid Rata), Tjokroaminoto’s book on the history of Islam *Tarich Agama Islam* (History of Islam), Hamka’s works on Islam and the likes. Poestaka Islam also ran a lending library called “Hidoep!” (Live) in Medan where a member could borrow 28 books a month for a monthly membership fee of 65 cents.

Printing houses such as N. V. Handel Mij. & Electriscche Drukkerij Sjarikat Tapanoeli also contributed significantly to the development of *roman pitjisan*. Sjarikat Tapanoeli was established in Medan in 1910 by several “*Indonesiërs*” (Indonesians) from Tapanoeli when *Pewarta Deli* began circulation with Djaendar Moeda as editor and H. M. Thahir as the director. By the late 1930s it had become one of the largest printing houses in Indonesia.⁵⁸⁵ As with other printing houses and periodicals in colonial days, Sjarikat Tapanoeli relied mainly on subscription fees from high-circulating daily newspapers such as, in this case, *Pewarta Deli*. In addition to *Doenia Pengalaman* and *Perwarta Deli*, Sjarikat Tapanoeli printed other leading periodicals in Medan such as *Abad XX*, and Islamic journals such as *Soeloeh*

⁵⁸⁵ "Memperkenalkan N. V. Handel Mij. & Electriscche Drukkerij “Sjarikat Tapanoeli,” *Abad XX*, 3-15 (May 13, 1939); 3-16 (May 20, 1939); 3-17 (May 27, 1939); 3-18 (June 3, 1939).

Islam, Pandji Islam, and Poernama. The printing house was nationalistically oriented, too. It produced nationalistic and Islamic books such as *Tenggelamnja Kapal van der Wijk* (by Hamka), *Hak Perempoean dalam Hoekoem Islam* (Women's Rights in Islamic Law), *Riwayat Dr. Rivai* (Biography of Dr. Rivai), *Riwayat Penghidoepan Dokter Soetomo dan Perdjoearannja*, and so on.

Other publishers active in commercial publications such as *roman pitjisan* in the 1930s in Sumatra were Penjiaran Ilmoe of Fort de Kock (*Roman Pergaoelan*), Tjerdas of Medan, the Nove Company of Medan (*Matahari*), Surya Library of Padang (*Surya*, edited by Mohd. Thahar Rachmad and Suryabratha), and Boekhandel-Bibliotheek-Leesgezelschap-Uitgever Alhambra of Medan (*Moestika Alhambra*, led by M. S. Radjo Magek, M. Chosen, Si Oema, Gaillardia [Emje], and Noerlelahayaty). Minangkabau merchants, entrepreneurs, and financiers funded most of these publishing enterprises.⁵⁸⁶ *Penjiaran Ilmoe* for instance was funded and assisted by Bank Nasional in Padang (established in 1930)⁵⁸⁷ and Handel Maatschappij INKORBA N.V., and grew rapidly in the late 1930s. Dt. Pamoentjak who contributed a preface to the first issue of *Roman Pergaoelan* was the secretary of the director of Bank Nasional. In sum the close relationship between the Medan literary circle and the Minangkabau network was the basis for the publication of *Doenia Pengalaman*.

The Nationalism of Medan Literature

In assessing the place of Medan literature in 1930s Indies, it is important to recognize that it would be misleading to equate Medan literature with no more than the *roman pitjisan*. Doing so would neglect the process of how popular literature

⁵⁸⁶ On the relation between the development of the Moehammadijah movement in Sumatra and the Minangkabau network, see Kahin, *Rebellion to Integration*, pp. 50-92.

⁵⁸⁷ As for the history of Bank Nasional, see *40 Tahun P.T. Bank Nasional (27 Desember 1930 – 27 Desember 1970)* (Bukittinggi: P.T. Bank Nasional, 1970).

developed in Medan, which evolved as a lively combination of Adi Negoro's *Abad XX*, Islamic journals, and *roman pitjisan*. Conceived in the early years of the 1930s, Medan literature was comprised of literary, popular, and Islamic journals that were all related and intertwined. These publications shared not only this Medan context, but also the common use of a language that was emerging as a medium for self-consciously national communication. As Muhammad Yamin wrote to *Abad XX* in 1934, in order to form a new society it was necessary for Indonesians to develop the Malay language and transform it into "*bahasa Indonesia*" (Indonesian language).⁵⁸⁸ By creating the Indonesian language, Yamin imagined a solid foundation of the Indonesian nation. In other words, Medan literature was part of the design to create the new (independent) Indonesian society. It was conceived as a cultural project to establish the colloquial Malay, as opposed to the standardized Malay endorsed by the colonial authorities and the popular Chinese-Malay that widely circulated in the market, as the national language, and to make popular novels as the basis for Indonesian literature.

In other words, for Yamin, Medan literature spoke to "our society, the Indonesian society" (*masjarakat kita, masjarakat Indonesia*).⁵⁸⁹ In its inaugural issue of October 1938, *Doenia Pengalaman* printed the following statement from its publisher Poestaka Islam, followed with an editorial remark.

Taking A Stride

⁵⁸⁸ Mr. Muhd. Yamin dalam "Pemandangan," "Kemenangan bahasa Indonesia," *ABAD XX*, Thn. 3, No. 5 (February 3, 1934), pp. 46-47.

⁵⁸⁹ Mr. Muhd. Yamin dalam "Pemandangan," "Kemenangan bahasa Indonesia," *ABAD XX*, Thn. 3, No. 5 (February 3, 1934), pp. 46-47.

Our society, Indonesian society is getting restless. It's stirring with quests, hopes, and yearning for progress. Change is desired; from the static, mute and tranquil to the dynamic, positive and active. All alive, energetic.

In the world of publications and literature, the same is taking place. From among the young generation, disciples of the new literature have made their mark! From pollen to stigma, the stigma bears fruit, and the fruit turns into healthy and scrumptious food for the restless soul wanting to move forward, that is the Indonesian people in general.

Poestaka Islam is forging a new path for the publishing world in Indonesia. Even though the path had already been trodden before by several benefactors, whose contribution shall not go to waste, the underbrush was back again. It is the path that young generation has long yearned for, supporters for the energetic, swift and lithe, that is romance and detective novels.

On the lap of the Indonesian youth so full of aspirations and lively spirits, we lay down this modest endeavor, with sincere hope that it will be cheerily welcomed.

To Mr. Pamoentjak and A. Diningrat, we entrust its life care, nurture, and fecundity. As to the new literati of Indonesia, we invite them to open their books and sharpen their *kalam* pens, to render their feelings in the world of experience that is constantly restless in search of progress.

Lastly, we hope that its unassuming name "Doenia Pengalaman" (World of Experience) will give it the resilience to extend its life.

Publisher: POESTAKA ISLAM – MEDAN

Medan, end of September '38

Wholehearted and Dedicated Reception.

Poestaka Islam's offering us to lead this romance and detective journal was received wholeheartedly and passionately. We understand that this task is heavy, too enormous for us to accept the entrustment for its care and training, even guidance to lead the new spirit of Indonesia.

But we believe in and are aware of the unstoppable fighting spirit inside the helmsmen of Poestaka Islam. The publication of the popular Islamic journal of knowledge that today is 5 years old and has become a best-selling weekly, *Pandji Islam*; the selling and publication of books appropriate for Indonesians reading in all subjects; the establishment of a library for book lending called Hidoep! Now the time has come for the launching of *Doenia Pengalaman*, to take up a field that is still open, romance and detective stories. To the two of us the task to lead it was delegated.

Bismillah [In the name of God]! We accept and have begun to stride ahead. Our hope is great that the new literati will join us and create this new path. And to the readers and Indonesian youth in general, we wish for a warm reception.

The saying, "No ivory is without a crack," gives us the hope to continue advancing.

Sincerely

A.M. PAMOENTJAK

A. DININGRAT

Medan, early October '38⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁹⁰ *Doenia Pengalaman: Madjallah Boelanan Roman dan Detective-roman*, No. 1, Th. 1, (Oct. 1938). Underline is original.

Moelai Melangkah

Masjarakat Kita, masjarakat Indonesia moelai gelisah. Dia bergerak mentjari-tjari, bertjita-tjita dan rindoe kemadjoean. Segalanja ingin perobahan; dari statis, diam dan tenang mendjelma mendjadi dinamis, positif dan aktif. Segalanja hidoep, giat-gesit.

Roman pitjisan activities were primarily in Sumatra and their influence in Java was rather limited, as Balai Poestaka and *peranakan* publications were dominant there. But the rise of *roman pitjisan* brought about some kind of ethnic contestation in publications in Malay/Indonesian language in the late 1930s. As a matter of fact, even

Dalam doenia pematjaan dan kesoesasteraan, djoega tidak ketinggalan. Dalam lingkoepan generasi moeda, ditanai pentjinta kesoesasteraan baroe! Dari sari mendjadi poetik, poetik menghasilkan boeah dan boeah mendjadi hidangan-santapan jang lazat tjita rasanja oentoek rohani jang gelisah ingin madjoe, oemoemnja ra'jat kita Indonesia.

Poestaka Islam merambah djalan baroe bagi doenia pematjaan Indonesia. Walaupun djalan itoe soedah pernah dilaloei oleh beberapa pengoesaha dan djasa itoe tidak akan hilang –, tetapi sekarang moelai semak kembali. Djalan jang sangat dirindoei oleh barisan baroe angkatan moeda, penjemangat roh jang giat-gesit, tjepat dan tangkas, jaitoe tjerita roman dan detektif.

Keharibaan poetra dan poeteri Indonesia jang penoeh bertjita-tjita dan berdjiwa hidoep, kami serahkan oesaha jang tidak sepertinja ini, dengan harapan jang soenggoeh moga-moga mendapat samboetan jang penoeh gembira.

Kepada toean-toean Pamoentjak dan A. Diningrat kami serahkan memimpinja, mengasoeh dan menjoeboerken hidoepnja. Dan kepada para poedjangga baroe Indonesia, kami persilakan memboeka rehal dan meroentjing kalam, meloekiskan rasa hati dalam doenia pengalaman jang senantiasa gelisah mentjari madjoe ini.

Penoetoep, moga-moga namanja jang sederhana "Doenia Pengalaman" memberi semangat jang tahan oentoek melandjoetkan oemoernja.

Penerbit: POESTAKA ISLAM – MEDAN

Medan, achir September '38

Samboetan sedia dan setia.

Penjerahan Poestaka Islam kepada kami akan memimpin madjallah roman dan detektif ini, kami samboet dengan penoeh sedia dan setia. Kami tahoe bahwa pekerdjaan ini amatlah berat, tidak lajaknja kami menerima serahkan boeat mengasoeh dan melatih bahkan mendjadi pandoe membimbing semangat baroe Indonesia.

Tetapi penoeh yakin dan insaf akan semangat jang hidoep tidak tertahan-tahan dalam djiwa pengemoedi Poestaka Islam. Diterbitkannja madjallah wetenschap Islam popoeler jang sekarang telah meningkat oesia 5 tahoen dan telah mendjadi minggoean dengan oplaag jang besar, bernama PANDJI ISLAM. Didjoealnja dan diterbitkannja boekoe-boekoe jang penting oentoek pematjaan Indonesia, dalam segala tjabang. Dibangoenkannja poela satoe bibliotheek oentoek perséwaan boekoe dengan nama HIDOEP! Maka sekarang datang poela temponja menerbitkan DOENIA PENGALAMAN, oentoek mengisi lapangan jang masih berboeka, roman dan detektif. Kepada kami berdoea dipikoelkan kerdja memimpinja.

Bismillah!, kami terima dan kami moelai melangkah. Sangatlah besar harapan kami kepada para poedjannga baroe akan toeroet serta mentjiptakan djalan baroe ini. Dan kepada para pematja dan oemoemnja poetra dan poeteri Indonesia, kami harapkan samboetan jang penoeh.

Peribahasa "Ta' ada gading jang tidak retak," memberi haraph kami akan madjoe teroes meneroes.

Wassalam

A. M. PAMOENTJAK

A. DININGRAT

Medan, awal October '38

in its heyday in the 1920s the Balai Poestaka's oligopolistic control and cultural hegemony were mainly confined to Java and Madoera, whereas in the Outer Islands, Balai Poestaka had to rely on local agents and publishers to sell and distribute its products. Publishers such as Sjarikat Tapanoeli and Penjiaran Ilmoe, which were later to become the main publishers of *roman pitjisan*, were Balai Poestaka's main agents in Sumatra. In other words, the Outer Islands were pretty much left for indigenous writers and private publishers to carve out their own markets.

Then in the late 1930s, *roman pitjisan* emerged. These serialized novels became popular, because they dealt with such subjects as politics, religion, and love affairs, which Balai Poestaka avoided, and did not focus on the Chinese in Java. Not only did these nationalistic *roman pitjisan* writers and publishers call for the creation of an "Indonesian library," they also advocated for the creating a national language – Indonesian – that was modern. Editors of these journals, such as Tamar Djaja and Pamoentjak, were quite emphatic that the kind of Indonesian language they wanted to use (or contributors to use) was not Chinese-Malay, which was used in the newspapers and literary works of the Chinese in Java.

While encouraging indigenous writers to produce original novels from the 1920s on, Balai Poestaka had failed to build a linguistic hegemony. Those who were recruited by this government-subsidized publishing house came from West Sumatra and/or South Tapanoeli, because they all had Dutch education and could claim a mother tongue that was close enough to the Malay that Balai Poestaka believed to be authentic. Their influence was noticeable in Balai Poestaka, especially in editing periodicals, which were considered their main products besides books. The editorship provided by Sumatran writers had certain characteristics. In 1930 Adi Negoro was appointed as the chief editor for its periodicals, *Pandji Poestaka* and *Sri Poestaka*. After he left Balai Poestaka, his position was succeeded by Sutan Takdir Alisjabhana

(1930-36), Armijn Pané (1936-41), and Sanoesi Pané (1941). All of these figures came from South Tapanoeli, and were either of Minangkabau or Batak ethnic background.

It is no wonder that many early novels by Balai Poestaka are set in Padang or the Minangkabau cultural domain. The emancipation and aspiration for modernity that many of the novels highlight stemmed from the young writers' challenge to their parents' culture and tradition. In the late 1930s, authors of Medan literature such as Hamka, Soeman, Selasih, and Damhoeri also contributed to Balai Poestaka. Especially, Hamka's works *Tuan Direktur* (Mr. Director), *Keadilan Ilahi* (Divine Justice), and *Didalam Lembah Kehidoepan* (In the Valley of Life) were first published in *roman pitjisan* journals before being reproduced by Balai Poestaka in book form. In this way, both in terms of style and personnel (writers and editors), the Indonesian nationalists were quietly taking over the literature part of the colonial state publishing house from within.

In the linguistic sphere, Indonesian cultural nationalists publicly declared their confidence in creating cultural identity through literature. A group of young intellectuals stirred up a discussion about the cultural identity of Indonesia in the 1930s. In 1933, the New Literati (*Poedjangga Baroe*) emerged as an open forum for intellectuals who wished to contribute their ideas on the cultural identity of Indonesia. The most prominent writer in this group was Sutan Takdir Alisjabhana, with the collaboration of Armijn Pané, Amir Hamzah, and Sanoesi Pané.

Those committed to the New Literati organized the first "Language Congress" (*Kongres Bahasa*) in Soerakarta from June 25 to 28, 1938. The conference was about the Malay/Indonesian language. "The new spirit," as Takdir Alisjabhana remarked, demanded using the correct Indonesian national language as opposed to the unsystematic Chinese-Malay language. Authors of Medan literature were also invited

to the Congress because of their ethnic and personal network with the New Literati group, but it appears that the Medan group had rather different visions.⁵⁹¹ At the conference, Adi Negoro gave a speech on the Indonesian language, “*Bahasa Indonesia dalam Persoerat Chabaran*” (Indonesian Language in the Press), and Pamoentjak remarked on issues of establishing a spelling convention for the language, “*Edjaan Bahasa Indonesia*” (Spelling in the Indonesian Language). Their resolution urged the discontinuation of “standardized” Malay or “high” Malay that was being taught at government schools and endorsed by Balai Poestaka. In their opinion, the Indonesian language needed to be brought back to the people, thus their promotion of the colloquial form. By so doing they challenged the Dutch cultural enterprise.

But for the Medan group, the question of the Indonesian people had remained overly vague at the Language Congress. In order to clarify the question, they organized their version of the conference, “*Komperensi Roman*” (Conference on Novels), on December 17, 1939. Adi Negoro took leadership of the conference. Almost all of the approximately forty attendants were persons who were committed to Medan literature; they were journalists, writers, and publishers of “roman.” The list of names of the popular writers included Matu Mona, Tamar Djaja, Joesoef Sou’yb, Hamka, Si Oema, Damhoeri, M. Yunan Nasution, Hasanoel Arifin, Loetan Gani, Joesoef Hoesin, A. W. Rata, Noerdin Soelan, M. Dien Jatim, and Mr. Indo. They came not only from Medan, but also from Fort de Kock. Conference discussions were impassioned and lengthy, lasting well into the night. Because many of the attendants were from West Sumatra and had a long road home, Adi Negoro finally cut the conference off at midnight, so that those attendees were able to leave for Fort de Kock in the following morning.

⁵⁹¹ Even to *Poedjangga Baroe*, popular roman pitjisan writers such as Joesoef Sou’yb contributed regularly.

This one-day conference highlighted the nationalistic spirit of the literary community. Its aim was to discuss whether the popularity of *roman pitjisan* contributed positively to the Indonesian society. At issue was the creation of “Roman Indonesia” through popular novels, that is, how to make Indonesian literature alive (*hidoepan roman Indonesia*). Attendants also discussed how to bring “*Roman Indonesia*” (the Indonesian novel) closer to the daily language of the readers. “Roman,” they believed, would benefit from use of simpler language that was familiar to the readers, because of its nature for “propaganda, suggestions, and criticism.”⁵⁹² The many kinds of roman that being published at the moment would help make the Indonesian people and society mature. This would in return stimulate the “Roman Indonesia.” With *roman pitjisan*, attendants at the conference believed that Roman Indonesia would make a more rapid progress.⁵⁹³

This nationalistic attitude distinguished the *roman pitjisan* group from the New Literati group, which organized the Language Congress. And they made the difference explicit.

Is it enough if there is only the New Literati?

Far from enough!

Is it sufficient if a language is decided and conferred only by those with dr. and mr. titles?

Doubtful!

It is true that they have a huge interest in language, but it does not guarantee that what they have systematized and put together corresponds with the will of

⁵⁹² “ROMAN KOMPERENSI,” *Roman Pergaoelan*, Thn. 1, No. 11 (December 20, 1939), pp. 1-2.

⁵⁹³ *Roman Pergaoelan*, 1-11 (December 20, 1939), pp. 1-2; *Pandji Islam*, 6-52 (December 25, 1939), p. 7660. “Roman Indonesia” was the concept of a novel-based literary form written by and from (Sumatran) Indonesian; it differed from the Balai Poestaka’s idea of proper Indonesian literature in that it used colloquial language.

the people. A language does not belong to kings, or to intellectuals, but grow from the community, from millions of people. From there it grows, from there it rises. The intellectual group “above” only systematizes and puts together the grammar. They systematized the grammar and structure only after the language had been “created” by the community.⁵⁹⁴

For the Medan group, it appears that the disagreement with regard to national language (therefore also language of media) is one of class. The discrepancy between the educated class and the ordinary people illustrates the problem that the Indonesian language was facing in the final moment of Dutch colonialism. By the time this argument materialized, the Netherlands had been occupied by Nazi Germany and Indonesians were confronted with an unpredictable future. Because of this, Balai Poestaka was no longer a significant challenge; instead, the New Literati became the new target that the Medan circle had to deal with.

[*Roman pitjisan*’s] content and style of language had effects on the people, even though they did not receive high education. Because often times their language is more accessible to laypeople compared to the language of those with advanced degrees. Because writers live and mature amongst the

⁵⁹⁴ “Timbangan Redaksi: Bahasa Indonesia,” *Pedoman Masyarakat*, Thn. 7, No. 46 (November 12, 1941), p. 861.

Apakah mentjoekoepi kalau sekiranya hanya “Poedjangga Baroe” itoe sadja?

Djaoeh dari tjoekoop!

Apakah mentjoekoep kalau sekiranya bahasa itoe hanya ditjamoeri dan diperkatakan oléh jang bertitel dr. dan mr.?

Beloem tentoe!

Betoel meréka menaroeh minat jang besar kepada bahasa, tetapi beloem tentoe apa jang meréka atoe dan soesoen itoe bersetoedjoe dengan kehendak masjarakat. Bahasa itoe boekan kepoenjaan radja-radja, boekan kepoenjaan kaoem intelek, tetapi bahasa toemboeh dari masjarakat, dari orang banjak jang bermillioen. Dari sana toemboehnja dan dari sana terbitnja. Kaoem terpeladjari jang “diatas” hanya menjoesoen dan mengatoer nahwoenja. Meréka atoe nahwoe dan sarafnja ialah setelah hahan-bahan bahasa itoe di “perboeat” lebih dahoele oléh masjarakat tadi.

populace. If writers do not connect with the “body” that generates the language, it will be difficult for them to provide the public with a language in an orderly manner. Because in all eras, authors have become leaders of the public, much more so than writers of grammar and structure [syntax].⁵⁹⁵

In the eyes of the Medan groups, both Balai Poestaka and the New Literati represented “high” cultural institutions, whose legitimacy came from their official and social positions. Because of their high station within the Indies class structure, they had neglected the masses who constituted the majority of Indonesians, and therefore their legitimacy as representatives of Indonesian literature was questionable. By contrast, the Medan group saw themselves as more authentic in that they had a large audience, which represented the majority of the market for popular literature in Sumatra. And this audience was not expected to be simply passive consumers. Rather, as Adi Negoro pointed out, readers of Medan literature were called into active and independent participation for “roman Indonesia” activity by reading them. Although the concept of developing active and independent readers might sound idealistic, it was necessary in order to shape the literary/publishing power that the Medan group pursued.

Developing this power, however, did not mean Medan writers were free from censorship. A good example was the M. Saleh Oemar’s arrest due to the charge of *persdelict* (press offence) in 1940. Saleh Oemar was a *roman pitjisan* writer and

⁵⁹⁵ “Timbangan Redaksi: Bahasa Indonesia,” *Pedoman Masyarakat*, Thn. 7, No. 46 (November 12, 1941), p. 862.

jg isi dan gaja bahasanja mempengaruhi kepada masjarakat, walaupun meréka tidak keloeat sekolah tinggi. Sebab kadang2 bahasa meréka lebih dikenal didalam kalangan oemoem daripada bahasa orang jang berdiploma tinggi. Sebab pengarang itoe hidoep dan toemboeh dalam kalangan orang banjak. Kalau sekiranya pengarang2 itoe tidak ada perhoeboengannja dengan “badan” pemikir bahasa itoe, maka soekarlah menjiarkan bahasa jang teratoer kepada orang banjak. Sebab pengarang itoelah ditiap-tiap zaman jang mendjadi pemimpin orang banjak, lebih besar daripada pengaroeh pengarang gramatica dan nahoe saraf.

editor of journal *Poernama*, a sister journal of *Doenia Pengalaman*. He was popular partly because his publications allegedly carried pornographic content. He was imprisoned for more than three months, and with his arrest *Poernama* lost its sole manager and main writer, and so was forced to suspend publication.⁵⁹⁶ Despite such challenges, the Medan circle kept producing popular literature until Indonesia was taken over by the Japanese military.

Although the number of its core members was small, the Medan group declared that they could help create the “national” language, as if it was a sphere over which they had sovereignty. This declaration of influence was supposed to have legitimacy because their literary works had gained mass support. Thus popular nationalism in the form of popular literature was created.

Because of its form, Medan literature did not attract the attention of colonial government, and caused no overt threat to the authorities. Yet this group had their rivals and enemies; they competed with Balai Poestaka and the Dutch-educated New Literati for cultural legitimacy, and fought for a market share against the popular Chinese-Malay literature. Medan literature also fought for the creation of the Indonesian nation, in part by imagining the underground revolutionary struggle represented by *Patjar Merah*. Its struggle developed with its audience, and its audience shared this dream with Medan literature, that their nation would materialize in the near future.

Colonial Protection

As a newly emerging city in the late colonial era, Medan symbolized modernity and provided the opportunity and energy for new cultural formations. The multicultural character of the city was conducive to the emergence of a uniquely

⁵⁹⁶ *Doenia Pengalaman*, III-9 (March 25, 1940).

“Indonesian” popular literature. This literature became a phenomenon in Sumatra because it enjoyed overwhelming popularity among the indigenous Muslim audience. It also aspired to nationalistic ideals by turning Malay into the national language “Indonesian,” and by establishing Indonesian literature.

Medan literature also introduced two kinds of new politics. First, it enjoyed an exclusive network of writers and publishers from the Minangkabau ethnic group who were able to make use of the Minangkabau commercial network as well as the modernist Islam network. The Minangkabau network helped publish popular literature, whereas the Islamic network and community both helped produce and the literary journals and provided its main consumers. Since Minangkabau were “outsiders” in the local politics in the East Coast of Sumatra, which was divided along ethnic lines and dominated by long simmering rivalries between ethnic groups,⁵⁹⁷ the Medan group demonstrated the politics of class in the cultural sphere by separating themselves from the *Poedjanga Baroe* group. They played the politics of language for popular consumption. Considering the popularity of the Medan literature, their approach appeared to be welcomed by a wide range of people.

A second kind of politics introduced by Medan literature involved a context of cultural politics as this literature shaped a culturally and economically contested sphere in the late colonial Indonesia. On the cultural front, Medan writers were faced with two forces – Balai Poestaka and the New Literati. Both cultural enterprises and literary circles were considered of high quality and representative of the “modern” form of Indonesian literature, which subsequently set the “national” standard after independence across the former Dutch colony.⁵⁹⁸ Yet in Sumatra, the cultural influence of Balai Poestaka was limited. A handful of Medan writers worked for Balai

⁵⁹⁷ Van Langenberg, “National Revolution in North Sumatra, Sumatra Timur and Tapanuli,” pp. 138-165.

⁵⁹⁸ Nidhi, “Fiction as History.”

Poestaka at one time with the result that from the 1920s on Balai Poestaka occasionally reproduced popular novels from Medan. In this sense, the Medan group took over Balai Poestaka from within. A more exciting contest took place between the Medan circle and the New Literati group, although the latter did not consider the former as worthy rival. The Medan group did not share the New Literati's vision of the national language and literature, as the latter was mainly confined to the Dutch-educated elite circle in Batavia. Instead, the Medan group tried to establish their own version of "Indonesian literature" on the basis of colloquial Malay and popular literature. In terms of the publishing market, they succeeded in gaining recognition. In this they succeeded in gaining some kind of cultural authority at the end of Dutch colonialism, while still being unable to make headway in the political front.

Their story and contest does not end here. While the Minangkabau network was key to the success of Medan literature the latter's reliance on this network also proved limiting. Medan literature commanded a specific but limited segment of the publishing market because the Chinese-Malay literature had been established far longer and was able to maintain its position of dominance. *Peranakan* publications overwhelmed the marketplace since the 1910s and Medan literature could not compete with it. Even in terms of Malay language, although *peranakan* publications were accused of using a corrupted form of Malay, their brand of Malay (the Chinese-Malay) was also dominant in urban settings.⁵⁹⁹ In this regard, any attempts to develop a larger market share outside Sumatra for Medan literature were generally fruitless.

It is safe to say that *peranakan*, the Minangkabaus, and the Javanese (or Java-oriented intellectuals), had their own slightly different versions of Malay. Each had its

⁵⁹⁹ Look at the list of newspapers in East Java from 1890 to 1939 made by Anderson. It shows that "Malay" was dominant from the beginning of vernacular newspapers in colonial East Java. Benedict Anderson, "Kata Pengantar," in Tjamboek Berdoeri, *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara* (Malang: ELKASA, 2004), p. 42.

own sphere of influence, but none was able to dominate Indonesia. The rise of Medan literature shows this contest over the establishment of the “national language” in colonial Indonesia, when it was still an empty signifier. The contest, however, was halted due to the Japanese takeover in 1942, and never recovered after Indonesia gained independence. After the independence, Java-oriented intellectuals continued the effort to create the national language and literature; but by then, the Minangkabaus and *peranakan* had become “minority” players and their influence in the literary sphere declined rapidly. In retrospect, ironically, both *peranakan* and Minangkabaus had been able to emerge as real contestants in the publishing market under the “protection” of the colonial government’s repressive regulations.

CHAPTER 9

(IN)VISIBLE CHINESE:

PRINT POWER, SECURITY, POLITICAL POSITION

In the 1930s newspapers that were on the *persbreidel* watch-list were put under surveillance for a year.⁶⁰⁰ The authorities constantly updated the list, but the degree of priority placed on this activity was subject to change depending on the socio-political condition. The changing priorities evident in the colonial state reflect the fact that external circumstances became more significant to the Indies state, as is implied in three-ways communications among the Governor-General, the Prosecutor General and the Director of Justice described below.⁶⁰¹

Concern about external security was new to the colonial authorities. Indeed, most colonial states concentrated on only internal security matters, as external security was generally guaranteed by written agreements and/or treaties among Western colonial powers. From the Dutch point of view, dire developments in international context took place in the 1930s. These included the Great Depression, which reached the Indies in 1930; the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931; Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933, his suppression of all opposition, and reoccupation of Rhineland in 1934-1935; the February failed coup in Japan and the subsequently intensified militarization; the breakout of the Spanish civil war; Italy's occupation of Ethiopia in

⁶⁰⁰ This is what *Sin Tit Po* claims in its article, "Sebab Apa "Soeara Oemoem" kena Persberidel?," *Sin Tit Po*, June 29, 1933.

⁶⁰¹ "Schema politiek maatregelen, Persbreidel" in Parket van den Procureur-Generaal (R. Verheyen), December 19, 1933, No. 6929/A.P. Geheim aan den Gouverneur-Generaal, in Mr. 1559x/1933; "Uittreksel uit de Nota der Algemeene Secretarie: Schema politieke maatregelen. Persbreidel," in Mr. 604x/1934.

1936; the Sino-Japanese war in China in 1937; war in Europe and the beginning of the formation of the Axis alliance in 1939; and, finally, the occupation of Holland in 1940.

How the Indies state would confront these rapid changes in the international situation during the 1930s became a significant policy decision that opened up possibilities for various (re)actions in the colonial society. An obvious problem for the Dutch authorities was Chinese reactions to Japan's aggression towards China.

Japan's Presence

In 1930, the census tallied 60.7 million persons living in the Indies. Out of the total, there were 1,233,000 persons in the "Chinese" category, which constituted about 2.3 percent of the population. Recent Chinese immigrants retained close contacts with their ancestral home, as historian C. F. Remer estimates based on Chinese emigrants' remittances to China in 1930. Funds transfer from the Netherlands Indies came to about 25 million guilders or 5.8 percent of the Foreign Asiatic income in the colony.⁶⁰² Since the amount of remittances was small, it suggests that the Chinese had their own networks and maintained ties between the Indies and China.

In an article published in 1930, Amry Vandenbosch, a political science professor at Kentucky University, wrote of strong material and sentimental bonds between the Indies Chinese with China:

among the totoks (full-blooded) and also among large number of peranakans there is a very active Chinese national sentiment which expresses itself in forms that cause the government no little trouble and concern. [...] The Chinese schools recruited large number of teachers from this region, and these have done much to awaken Chinese nationalist sentiment. There is much

⁶⁰² C. F. Remer, *Foreign Investment in China* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 185.

propaganda from out of China; the Kuomintang controls a considerable press in the Indies. Events in China are closely followed and when China has a grievance the press reflects it. [...] When Canton was still revolutionary Chinese conflict was transported to the Indies and disturbances took place. The boycott against Japan was observed with varying degrees of rigidity in different parts of the Indies, and in some places was maintained by terrorization. [...]

“(the) Chinese in the Indies really do not constitute the danger politically that some people would have us believe. They are too practical to continue sending money to China for purely sentimental reasons without some tangible return. [...] Complaints are expressed in the Chinese press that they are making little economic progress. [...]

The [Chinese] Nationalist government has not forgotten about the Chinese colonies abroad, and its attitude in most respect is similar to that of its predecessors. It is demanding a new consular treaty with the Netherlands and also desires the assimilation of Chinese to Europeans in the East Indies.⁶⁰³

But Vandenbosch also recognized that the majority of Chinese in the Indies were loyal Dutch subjects with only sentimental interest in China as the “long-continued turmoil in China has disillusioned many and caused a general decrease of interest in the homeland.”⁶⁰⁴ Even though American and English scholars such as Vandenbosch and John S. Furnivall⁶⁰⁵ claimed that by 1930 there was no longer such thing as the “Chinese question,” and that the Chinese were not politically dangerous, the above

⁶⁰³ Amry Vandenbosch, “A Problem in Java: The Chinese in the Dutch East Indies,” *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 11 (November 1930), pp. 1015-1017.

⁶⁰⁴ Vandenbosch, “A Problem in Java,” p. 1016.

⁶⁰⁵ Furnivall, *The Netherlands India*.

citation already signaled that the Chinese might eventually bring anxiety to the Dutch government in the Indies.

The timing of the publication of Vandenbosch's article is worth noticing. In 1929, a year before the piece was published, the Chinese government passed a new Chinese citizenship act, which reaffirmed the principle of *jus sanguinis* and stipulated that a Chinese who wished to become a national of another country could only lose his Chinese citizenship with the permission of the Ministry of the Interior.⁶⁰⁶ In other words, this was the time when the question of citizenship reemerged as a diplomatic issue between China and the Netherlands, which is what appears to have prompted Vandenbosch to remark that the Chinese did not constitute a political threat to the Indies, while implying that their existence could cause a diplomatic headache for the Netherlands.

Vandenbosch later incorporated his article into his book, *The Dutch East Indies*,⁶⁰⁷ which arguably became a standard introduction to the affairs of the Indies. Ten years after the article was published, Vandenbosch's view on the Indies Chinese question was also reproduced in a book published in Japan. Regardless of whether or not the author was a Chinese expert, the appearance of Vandenbosch's article as a Japanese publication deserves closer notice.

This article was published in a book entitled *Ranryo Indo niokeru Kakyo* (Overseas Chinese in the Dutch Indies), edited by *Mantetsu Toua Keizai Chosa-kyoku* (the Research Institute of East Asian Economy of the South Manchurian Railroad Company, hereafter Mantetsu). Mantetsu was a Japanese enterprise that not only constructed and operated railways in Manchuria, but also undertook the construction

⁶⁰⁶ Donald E. Willmott, *The National Status of the Chinese in Indonesia 1900-1958* (Ithaca: Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1961), p. 17.

⁶⁰⁷ Amry Vandenbosch, *The Dutch East Indies: Its Government, Problems and Politics* (2nd ed.) (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1941).

of towns, harbor improvements, coal and iron mining, social infrastructure, and agricultural experimentation. It was also known for its intelligence activity; its research institute published a series of books on Asia including the Southeast Asian region. During the period of 1938 and 1940, it published a series of six-book series on the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, one of which was the title mentioned above.⁶⁰⁸ The series was printed in haste, because after the Sino-Japanese war broke out in July 1937, the Japanese government was preparing to establish a new Asian order. The general introduction for the series revealed two aims: first and foremost the task at hand was to understand to what extent overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia would collaborate with the Japanese in the near future, while the second aim was to examine the socio-economic influence of this population group.⁶⁰⁹ The text also maintained that in order for Japan to establish a new regional order, it had to build a direct relationship with seven million overseas Chinese in the region.⁶¹⁰

The book contains significant data on the Indies Chinese. It provides general demographic, economic, political and social data, while also showing to whom Japan was paying attention among the pro-Japanese prominent Chinese. The Mantetsu team made use of Vandenbosch's article to map the political position of the Chinese in the Indies.⁶¹¹ This does not mean that the team did not know or read Dutch sources. They referred to Dutch colonial publications such as *Vragen van den dag* (Questions of the Day), *Regeerings-almanak voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Governmental-Almanac for the Netherlands Indies), and *Indische Verslag* (Indies Reports) to develop data on the Chinese political position in official colonial institutions. But since their intention in

⁶⁰⁸ The series were published from 1939 to 1940, covering, in the publication order, Siam, French Indochina, the Philippines, the Dutch Indies, British Malaya, and relation between Nanyang Chinese and Fukkien/Canton.

⁶⁰⁹ Mantetsu Toua Keizai Chosa-kyoku, *Ranryo Indo niokeru Kakyo* (Tokyo: Mantetsu Toua Keizai Tyosa-kyoku, 1940), pp. 1-2.

⁶¹⁰ Mantetsu Toua Keizai Chosa-kyoku, *Ranryo Indo niokeru Kakyo*, p. 1.

⁶¹¹ Mantetsu Toua Keizai Chosa-kyoku, *Ranryo Indo niokeru*, pp. 104-156.

making this report was to seek out pro-Japan Chinese, they disregarded other categorizations that could have been made of the Chinese in the Indies according to political orientation, which included groups such as pro-China, pro-Holland and pro-Indonesia Chinese.⁶¹² The reason behind Japan's attention to pro-Japan Chinese was obviously its intention to expand its activities in Southeast Asia.

From the 1920s onward Japan's economic expansion into Southeast Asia had increased rapidly, and by the 1930s its economic influence over the Indies could no longer be ignored.⁶¹³ The Indies-Japan trade relations constituted a major international challenge for the Indies government. In the 1930s Japan's economic presence became a burning issue in the Indies as well as elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Even the vernacular press reported on Japan's expansion in the Indies.⁶¹⁴ The ratio between imports and exports became quite unbalanced. While exports to Japan constituted only four percent of all exports, imports from Japan exceeded one-third of total imports. Under this condition, the Indies state issued an emergency ordinance to restrict imports of cement and beer from Japan, because it was concerned with rising economic protectionism after the Great Depression and with Japan's economic penetration. In order to resolve the situation, a series of Japan-Dutch trade negotiations took place. Informal talks began in late 1933, and formal talks resumed in June 1934. But while the Indies government sought to restrict imports from Japan, it rejected Japan's requests for the expansion of exports and investments, maritime

⁶¹² The book referred to the collective works of a prominent Chinese expert, Fromberg's *Verspreide Geschriften* (The Collective Works of P. H. Fromberg) as a footnote. It introduced Fromberg as a judge and pro-China expert, and his book as a collection of overseas Chinese grievances.

⁶¹³ Shin'ya Sugiyama and M. Guerrero (eds.), *International Commercial Rivalry in Southeast Asia in the Interwar Period* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies, 1994); Peter Post, "The formation of the pribumi business elite in Indonesia, 1930s-1940s," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Vol. 152, No. 4 (1996), pp. 609-632. For an overview on the Japanese community in Southeast Asia, see Saya Shiraishi and Takashi Shiraishi, "The Japanese in Colonial Southeast Asia: An Overview," in Saya Shiraishi and Takashi Shiraishi (eds.), *The Japanese in Colonial Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1993), pp. 1-20.

⁶¹⁴ "Expansie Japan di Indonesia: Dalem 'The People's Tribune' penerbitan No. 4 (Vol. 6) tanggal 16 februari jang laloe kita batja satoe pemendangan sebagi di bawah ini," *Sin Tit Po*, March 9, 1934.

agreements between the two countries, and unrestricted immigration to the Indies. Because of this gap between the two governments, the negotiation broke down in late 1934. After this break in negotiations lasted more than one year, on June 8, 1936,⁶¹⁵ the two countries reached an agreement on cargo shipping. The Netherlands government agreed to a compromise on various points for it, resulting in the Hart-Ishizawa agreement on interim (intra-quarter) trades on April 9, 1937.⁶¹⁶ As had become clear in the trade negotiations, the Indies had a weak position against Japan's aggressive demands. The trade talks made the Indies government realized the challenges it faced in dealing with Japan. The negotiation process showed that a main motivation of the Indies state was the desire to appease the Japanese government.

The challenge posed by Japan for the Indies government was the major factor defining *persbreidel* in the latter half of the 1930s, except for those cases involving Dutch newspapers. Japan constituted the main security concern for the Indies government during this period. Patterns in the number of the colonial files being issued at the time reflected this shift of policy priority. The number of files on "movements," meaning political activities by "communists" and "extremists," which had constituted the major part of colonial mail report declined substantially as the 1930s proceeded. In the 1920s there were four or five hundreds files sent to The Hague every year on "communists," especially from 1923 to 1928, and several

⁶¹⁵ It is to be noted that on February 26, 1936 military revolt took place in Tokyo (February 26th Incident of 1936). On the day, about 1,500 troops went on a rampage of assassination against the current and former prime ministers and other cabinet members, and even members of the imperial court. But other military units put down the revolt and many coup plotters were executed after secret trials. Despite public dismay over the incident and the discredit it brought to numerous military figures, Japan's civilian leadership capitulated to the army's demands in the hope of ending domestic violence. But the revolt pushed Japan to be more aggressive and the military eventually took over the government control. Defense budgets saw rapid increase, naval construction was expanded (Japan announced that it would no longer accede to the London Naval Treaty, which restricted Japan's naval construction), and patriotic indoctrination was intensified. In this way Japan moved toward wartime preparation. So it was the Japan's military government that signed the Japan-Dutch trade agreement.

⁶¹⁶ Howard Dick, "Japan's Economic Expansion in the Netherlands Indies Between the First and Second World Wars," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. XX, No. 2 (1989), pp. 244-272.

hundred on “communists” and “nationalists” from 1929 to 1933/34. But between the late 1920s and 1934, an almost equal number of files were produced on “Chinese,” and from the middle of the 1930s, the files sent to The Hague on “Japanese” outnumbered all those on communists, nationalists, and the Chinese combined. This pattern again suggests that by the middle of the 1920s and the late 1930s the top security concern of the Indies government had evidently shifted from “communists” to “Japanese.”

The Japan question did not solely derive externally, but took a different shape within the Indies colony, where was related to anti-Japanese actions and discourses among the Indies Chinese residents. Several waves of anti-Japanese actions had taken place up until the middle of the 1930s. In the 1920s there had been conflicts between the Indies government and the Chinese consuls over the use of the Chinese national flag on the days of national mourning, one of which was the day for commemorating the Twenty-one Demands on May 25. The demands in question in the commemoration were those made by Japan on the Chinese government. During World War I, in January 1915 Japan had sent a set of demands to the nominal government of the Republic of China that resulted in two treaties signed in May 1915. Among other things, the treaties guaranteed special privileges for Japan in China much like those already enjoyed by major European powers, confirmed Japan’s railway and mining claims in Shandong province, and gave Japan special concessions in Manchuria. In short the treaties symbolized a national humiliation for the Chinese. The Indies government understood this historical background well, and yet, as Vandenbosch observes in his article on Indies Chinese, it had “prohibited flying the flag at half mast on these days on the ground that it could not permit within its territory any act which would constitute an offence to Japan, a power with which it is

on friendly relations.”⁶¹⁷ The Indies government had prioritized deferring to Japan’s sensibilities over those of its Chinese residents’, and warned that all kinds of Chinese actions that could affect Japan’s dignity should be avoided.

In 1932 and 1933 large-scale anti-Japan demonstrations and boycotts of Japanese goods took place. Similar anti-Japan movement occurred in other colonies in Southeast Asia. The trigger was the establishment of the Manchuria puppet state by the Japanese government in September 1932. The Indies Chinese press zealously reported on this development and even campaigned for anti-Japanese actions. Their acts naturally displeased the Indies government, and thus the very first *persbreidel* to be issued in the Indies was applied to *Warta Warna* in Semarang. The rationale was that its anti-Japanese articles had caused insecurity of public order. But the last big blow came in late 1937 after the Sino-Japanese war broke out. As the war escalated, the Indies Chinese press published even more aggressive anti-Japanese articles. In response the Indies government issued *persbreidel* against those newspapers one after another.

Japan’s aggressive moves in Asia also took a cultural turn.⁶¹⁸ Starting in the early 1930s, Japan made a move to penetrate the print culture of the region by circulating its political propaganda. To do this, Japan started building its own print houses and subsidizing Indonesian newspapers. These activities pushed the Indies government to take steps to counter Japan’s cultural penetration.

⁶¹⁷ Vandenbosch, “A Problem in Java,” p. 1017.

⁶¹⁸ For a general view of Japan’s cultural operations in the Indies, see Ken’ichi Goto, *Returning to Asia’: Japan-Indonesia Relations 1930s-1942* (Tokyo: Ryukei Shyosha, 1997), pp 278-295. Goto rightly maintains that Japan’s cultural operations consist of publishing Japanese language newspapers and committing Japanese journalists to Indonesian nationalist movement.

Bureau for East Asian Affairs

The growing presence of Japan in Asia and in the Indies in particular required the Indies government to reorganize its administrative institutions, and in 1932 a major administrative reorganization took place. The two Bureaus for Chinese Affairs and for Japanese Affairs were merged into a new one, the Bureau for Chinese and East Asian Affairs (*Dienst der Chineesche Zaken en Oost-Aziatische Aangelegenheden*, hereafter Bureau for East Asian Affairs). The head of this Bureau was H. Mouw, who had been the head of Bureau for Chinese Affairs since 1919. He ran the new bureau until his retirement in 1935, and then A. H. J. Lovink took his position on July 25, 1935. Lovink served as its head until the Bureau was dissolved in 1942 following Japan's occupation of the Indies.

Combining the bureaus of Chinese and Japanese Affairs represented a change of policy. Since 1916, the Bureau for Chinese Affairs had a section for Japanese affairs. Back then, H. Mouw was the head of the bureau, which had two officers for Chinese Affairs, J. A. M. Bruneman and J. Snellen van Vollenhoven, while H. L. Bense was in charge of the Japanese Affairs. In 1921 the independent bureau, Bureau for Japanese Affairs, was organized and a year later it became the Office for Japanese Affairs. Its advisor was P. A. van de Stadt until the office was combined with the Bureau for East Asian Affairs in 1932.

The newly established bureau had to watch over not only activities of the Indies Chinese, but also political and military developments taking place in China and Japan. Nevertheless, as the name showed, it put more focus on Chinese affairs than those of Japanese. The Chinese division had ten officials. This included five officers of Chinese Affairs: J. Snellen van Vollenhoven, Dr. A. D. A. de Kat Angelino, J. B. de Wilde, A. H. J. Lovink, and L. Kamper. Indonesians were appointed as excisemen with Tjitrotaroeno assuming the position of first exciseman, and Raden Soeria Adi

Negara and Soeratman as his subordinates. A Chinese, S. Cho, also known as Tsang Tsui Shih, had been appointed as an officer since January 7, 1922. In 1934 one more officer was added. All officers for Chinese affairs were trained as Sinologists at Leiden University, and hence they all were able to read Chinese language.

Between late 1936 and 1937 under the leadership of Lovink, further administrative restructuring of the Bureau for East Asian Affairs took place as new positions were added. One editor, Dr. L. G. M. Jaquet and four aspirant-controllers, F. J. E. van Gelden, Mr. Th. H. Bot, S. Meijer Jr. and F. P. Thomassen, were appointed. Three aspirant officials were newly stationed in Peking (H. Hagenaar) and Tokyo (G. J. Dissevelt and G. J. Jogejans). S. Cho was now a chief translator for Japanese language, while J. King and Tso Ping Nam took charge in Chinese language translations. With these changes, the size of the staff at the Bureau for East Asian Affairs had doubled to twenty officials.⁶¹⁹

High officials working for the Bureau for Chinese Affairs tended have lengthier terms of service in the colonial administration, when compared with officials in other administrative positions. For instance, J. Snellen van Vollenhoven served as adviser in the Indies for twenty-three years, his last post being that of Deputy Adviser on East Asian Affairs to the Government at Batavia before returning to Holland in 1933. H. Mouw also worked for twenty-three years from 1912, and was eventually in charge of the Bureau from 1916 until his retirement in 1935. In the capacity of advisor for the Bureau Mouw travelled widely in China, Japan, Indo-China, Siam and the Straits Settlements, and built an international intelligence network between the imperial powers.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁹ *Regeerings-Almanak voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij), 1895-1942.

⁶²⁰ Mr. 321x/1922; 434x/1922; 430x/1931. On February 1931 an international conference on Chinese affairs was held in Singapore where British, Dutch, and French colonial officials on the Chinese affairs as well as Siamese officials discussed on the Chinese matters in Asia. Mr. 430x/1931.

The Bureau for East Asian Affairs was responsible for gathering information on the political activities of Indies Chinese as well as China's political development and Japan's actions in Asia. In the 1930s the bureau spent more time than ever on Japan's affairs, because the latter directly affected China's development and evoked strong reactions from Indies Chinese. The bureau regularly sent confidential reports on those issues, but the additional information it also provided to help make sense of newspaper reports became worthwhile reading for colonial officials as well.

Among other issues, Japan's aggressive approach to Indonesian nationalists, intellectuals, and journalists caught the bureau's attention. Development in the year 1933 was particularly notable as Japan invited two prominent intellectuals – Mohamad Hatta and Parada Harahap – to visit Japan. According to a Dutch confidential report, Hatta visited Japan for a month in April 1933.⁶²¹ The report cited Japanese newspapers in Osaka and Kobe, which described him as “the young Gandhi of Java” (*de jonge Gandhi van Java*). These newspapers detailed Hatta's life, the connection between his visit and Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations, and how his people's self-consciousness would awaken. They reported that Hatta's visit would bring Japan and Indonesia, whose people shared the (Asian) blood, closer together. According to the newspapers, the intention of Hatta's visit was to study Japan's industrial development as a model for the Indies in the development of private industries for its economic independence, which was crucial for its political sovereignty. The Dutch report also described the reaction of the Indies press to Hatta's Japanese visit. The semi-governmental Dutch newspaper, *Java Bode*, made an abridged translation of the English edition of *Osaka Mainichi* (Osaka Daily), and concluded Hatta to be a propagandist but harmless.

⁶²¹ “Bezoek van Mohamad Hatta aan Japan,” Mededeelingen Chineesche Zaken, No. 6, 1933, in Mr. 711x/1933.

A more sobering warning signal for the Dutch came from *Jawa Nippo*, the Japanese language newspaper in Java, when it mentioned that Hatta met several influential persons in Japan, one of whom was Rash Behari Bose, the exiled British Indian agitator and leader of the anti-British movement.⁶²² During World War I Bose became one of the leading figures of the Ghadar Conspiracy, which attempted to trigger a mutiny in India in February 1915. The revolution failed and most revolutionaries were captured. But Bose managed to escape British intelligence, obtained a passport for Japan by asking P. N. Tagore, a relative of the famous poet Tagore, and reached Japan in late 1915 by way of Singapore and Hong Kong. In Japan he established a shelter for radical Pan-Asian groups and became a Japanese citizen in 1923, living as a journalist and writer. In 1942 he formed the Indian Independence League in Tokyo and started organizing non-residential Indians in Southeast Asia. Through his activity, he became close friends of Japanese right-wing nationalists and Pan-Asianism leaders, such as Toyama Mitsuru.⁶²³

Hatta's other significant meeting took place with Shimonaka Yasaburo, a member of an extremely reactionary nationalist association, *Kodokai* (Imperial Way Society).⁶²⁴ Shimonaka was a well-known leader of labor and peasant movements, the founder of a teachers' union, and founder of a successful publishing company, Heibonsha. But his ideological position changed from leftism to National Socialism in the early 1930s, which also embraced pan-Asianism.⁶²⁵ Pan-Asianism was an ideology formed in the 1930s, promoting a view that under the leadership of Japan,

⁶²² "Bezoek van Mohamad Hatta aan Japan," Mededeelingen Chineesche Zaken, No. 6, 1933, in Mr. 711x/1933.

⁶²³ For a biography of Rash Behari Bose, see Nakajima Takeshi, *Nakamuraya no Bose: Indo Dokuritsu Undo to Kindai Nihon no Ajia Shugi* (Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 2005).

⁶²⁴ "Bezoek van Mohamad Hatta aan Japan," Mededeelingen Chineesche Zaken, No. 6, 1933, in Mr. 711x/1933.

⁶²⁵ For biographical description of Shimonaka Yasaburo, see *Shimonaka Yasaburo Jiten* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1965).

Asian nations would solidify and create a continental identity that would defeat Western imperialism. The Dutch secret report found Hatta's access to Pan-Asianism organizations and leaders troubling because those networks would support nationalist movements in the Indies as well as British India. The worrisome indicator was the anti-British movement being organized by Bose and other Indian exiles in Japan. Since the Japanese government did not suppress such activity, it posed a threat to Western powers. At the same time, the report also found relief in the fact that no Indonesian political exiles had yet sought refugee status in Japan, and hence no evidence of active Japan-Indonesian associational activity appeared to exist.⁶²⁶

While Hatta met Japanese and Indian political figures, Parada Harahap's trip to Japan focused more on industrial and economic aspects of the country. It appeared that Harahap went to Japan not in the capacity of journalist but as entrepreneur. He was accompanied by seven friends and arrived at Kobe on December 1933.⁶²⁷ He met three members of the executive board of the *Ishihara Sangyo Koshi* (Ishihara Concern), which owned iron ore mines in British Malaya and the Indies and was growing as a trading company in the region.⁶²⁸ In Kobe and Osaka, the Chamber of Commerce, and Governor and Mayor offered dinners for the Harahap group. The Dutch report on Harahap's trip notes that the English edition of *Osaka Mainichi* referred to Harahap as "the king of newspaper in Java" (*Java kranten koning*) and praised the good relationship between Japan and Java.⁶²⁹ According to the colonial document, Harahap managed to avoid delivering any official speech during his stay in

⁶²⁶ "Bezoek van Mohamad Hatta aan Japan," Mededeelingen Chineesche Zaken, No. 6, 1933, in Mr. 711x/1933. For Hatta's understanding of Japan's "return to Asia," see Goto, 'Returning to Asia,' pp. 307-322.

⁶²⁷ "Reis Parada Harahap naar Japan," Mededeelingen Chineesche Zaken, No. 1, 1934, in Mr. 107x/1934.

⁶²⁸ Yasukichi Yasuba, "Hiroichiro Ishihara and the Stable Supply of Iron Ore," in Saya Shiraishi and Takashi Shiraishi (eds.), *The Japanese in Colonial Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1993), pp. 139-154.

⁶²⁹ *Osaka Mainichi*, December 6, 1934, in "Reis Parada Harahap naar Japan," Mededeelingen Chineesche Zaken, No. 1, 1934, in Mr. 107x/1934.

Japan, despite various requests. The implication was that Japan was eager to develop a relationship with Harahap, who continued to contribute his travel essays to his daily *Bintang Timoer*.⁶³⁰

Japan's overtures to Hatta and Harahap were not entirely successful. Hatta was arrested in February 1934 due to his political activity along with his connection with Japan's right-wing activists, and then banished to Boven Digoel in January 1935. Harahap went bankrupt in 1935 and was charged with financial felony.⁶³¹ But despite these setbacks, by the beginning of the 1930s Japan's cultural activities had begun to take root in the Indies.

Japan's Propaganda, Printing Houses, Print Competition

Since the 1920s, Japan's economic presence in Southeast Asia rapidly grew. Japan's economic interests in the region, especially in the Indies, lied in rich natural resources such as oil and rubber that were considered essential for Japan's economic progress. In the 1930s Japan's southward expansion became justified by the ideology of Pan-Asianism, mostly led by various rightist organizations that developed close relationships with the Japanese government.⁶³²

⁶³⁰ "Reis Parada Harahap naar Japan," Mededeelingen Chineesche Zaken, No. 1, 1934, in Mr. 107x/1934.

⁶³¹ Harahap later was funded by Japan for his newspaper business.

⁶³² Along with Japanese economic penetration into Southeast Asia, many Japanese merchants, fishermen, and camera shop owners worked for the Japanese government by collecting socio-economic information. For Japanese southward advancement and spy activities, see Eric Robertson, *The Japanese File: Pre-War Japanese Penetration in Southeast Asia* (Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Asia, 1979); Peter Elphick, *Far Eastern File: The Intelligence War in the Far East, 1930-1945* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997); Tony Matthews, *Shadows Dancing: Japanese Espionage Against the West 1939-1945* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993). As a counter activity, in the 1930s Indies, the Dutch authorities closely watched Japanese espionage activities. See Netherlands Information Bureau, *Ten years of Japanese burrowing in the Netherlands East Indies: Official report of the Netherlands East Indies government on Japanese subversive activities in the archipelago during the last decade* (New York: Netherlands Information Bureau, 1942); Robert D. Haslach, *Nishi No Kaze, Hare: Nederlands-Indische inlichtingendienst contra agressor Japan* (Utrecht: Van Kampen & Zn. Weesp, 1985).

Japan's aggressive propaganda involved various methods. In the 1930s, the intensification of Japanese "cultural" activities in the Indies, both formal and informal, became a problem with regard to the colonial order and tranquility. Formal cultural activities were carried out by the Japanese consulates in the Indies. The Japanese consulate in Soerabaja, for instance, produced and circulated propaganda documents on Pan-Asianism by the Japanese government, held anti-Chinese lectures, and wrote letters of protest to Dutch authorities against anti-Japanese newspaper articles.⁶³³

Informal cultural activities included publishing newspapers in the Malay language, and building and making use of collaborative relationship with Indonesian intellectuals and journalists. The Japanese started to publish Malay newspapers in the late 1930s. Two Japanese-owned newspapers deserve our attention here. In 1937 the daily *Sinar Selatan* (Southern Gleam) began circulation in Semarang with a well-known figure, Tsuda Tsukasa, as a chief editor who was the president as well as editor-in-chief of daily *Astra*. *Sinar Selatan* was considered a semi-official Japanese newspaper and had Taira Isamu as its editor-in-chief, Mohamad Soedradjat as the vice editor-in-chief, and Sjamsoedin also in the editorial board. In late 1938, *Sinar Selatan* discontinued its publication because its core associate Kaneko Keizo had arranged to purchase daily the *Warta Harian* (Daily News) in Batavia.⁶³⁴ The other newspaper, under the guidance of the Japanese consulate, *Tohindo Nippo* (Indies Daily), was launched in Batavia in 1937. Kubo Tatsuji, who owned *Nichiran Shogyo Shimbun* (Japan-Netherlands Commercial Newspaper) since 1934, was committed to the establishment of *Tohindo Nippo* and made it a joint venture.⁶³⁵ Saito Masao, who used to be the editor-in-chief of a Japanese daily *Jawa Nippo*, became the president, while Taniguchi Goro served as the editor-in-chief. Siauw Tjin Hoen or Shio Sei Oen

⁶³³ Vb. 24-10-39-M 44; Mr. 146x/1940 in Vb. 14-3-40-A 17.

⁶³⁴ Mr. 673x/1939.

⁶³⁵ *Nichiran Shogyo Shimbun* changed its name to *Tohindo Nippo* in 1937.

took charge of publishing and the Ogawa Corporation took responsibility of the printing.⁶³⁶

Building up collaborative relationships with Indonesian nationalists and leading journalists was also important for the Japanese in the publishing business. Three approaches were possible in this regard. The first was to build a network among indigenous journalists through a leading indigenous journalist, in this case Saëroen, who as editor-in-chief of *Pemandangan* had a long history of involvement with Indies newspapers and enjoyed a good relationship with leading Indonesian “national” figures such as Dr. Soetomo, Thamrin, Soekardjo, H. A. Salim, and Parada Harahap.⁶³⁷ Kubo and a missionary Kurinoki Tatsuo had access to Saëroen. Through Saëroen’s network, Kubo and Kurinoki became acquainted with leading Indonesian figures and built a sort of collaborative relations to spread Japan’s ideas of pan-Asianism.

The second method for effective propagandizing was to increase the number of pro-Japanese Indonesian periodicals.⁶³⁸ Soerabaja in particular had many pro-Japanese periodicals. Among others, *Soeara Oemoem* (Public Voice), *Djawa Timoer* (East Java), *Sipatahoenan*, *Nan Sen* (Soerabaja-based weekly magazine) each had a large circulations and therefore relatively strong influence. *Soeara Oemoem* was led by Dr. Soetomo, while Parada Harahap was deeply involved in the publication of *Djawa Timoer*. After October 1937, Kurinoki who was competent in Malay

⁶³⁶ It is not surprising for the fact that “Indonesian” journalists worked for the Japanese press considering relatively “racially” collaborative circumstances in print media industry in the Indies. The Indies society was considered as “racially” distinguished society as Furnivall describes, and yet for journalists it was not unusual to work in print media industry regardless of “racial” lines. On Furnivall’s discussion of plural society, see Furnivall, *Netherlands India*. Working relations among journalists in print media industry, see for instance *Sin Po 25 Tahun 1910-1935* (Batavia: Sin Po, 1935).

⁶³⁷ Mr. 11x/1939 in Vb. 20-1-39-F2, 673x/1939 in Vb. 10-7-39-S26.

⁶³⁸ Mr. 988x/38, 11x/39 in Vb. 20-1-39-F2.

frequently contributed articles on Japanese propaganda to four newspapers including *Soeara Oemoem*.

The third propaganda measure was to extend Japan's influence over local newspapers by providing loans, financing, and purchasing advertisements.⁶³⁹ By financing local newspapers, Japanese agents were able to persuade them to carry pro-Japanese articles. In late 1938 the Japanese tried to purchase *Warta Harian*, a Batavia-based daily.⁶⁴⁰ *Warta Harian* was considered a neutral newspaper and therefore Japanese agents thought that it would not be difficult for *Warta Harian* to carry pro-Japanese articles from time to time without drawing attentions from the colonial authorities. The agents pursued this plan for more than a year, had conducted a background research on *Warta Harian*, and obtained information on the number of publication, readers, subscribers and its business situation.

Japanese agents evidently made every effort to propagate Japan's political ideas in the Indies through its cultural policy and were in some sense successful in their mission to penetrate the indigenous journalistic network. The colonial authorities had already recognized these Japanese activities and subsequently begun to collect information on them. As the Japanese cultural activities, which consisted of conducting anti-Chinese and anti-Western campaigns as well as finding and encouraging collaborators among Indonesian journalists and nationalists, intensified in 1938, the Indies government started to exercise *persbreidel* against such Japanese newspapers as *Sinar Selatan* and *Tohindo Nippo*. From the secret colonial documents one is able to see how, when and where Japanese agents operated clandestinely, but it is difficult to identify how colonial authorities obtained this information about them. One possible explanation suggests the presence of Dutch informants among the

⁶³⁹ Mr. 988x/38 in Vb. 20-1-39-F2.

⁶⁴⁰ Mr. 673x/39; 859x/39 in Vb. 19-9-39-Z37.

Indonesian journalists who worked closely with the Japanese. What is clear in any case is that the Dutch eventually tried to counter Japan's moves by imposing business regulations.

Japan's cultural activities were closely intertwined with its economic activities. Among other developments, Japan's penetration of the print business posed a threat to the colonial authorities. In 1934 the Department of Economic Affairs sent a draft of "Business Regulation Ordinance 1934" to the Council of the Netherlands Indies.⁶⁴¹ It became an official ordinance in April 1935 (Official Gazette No. 595) and known as the Printing Regulation (*Reglementeering Drukkerij*).⁶⁴² The regulation required all printing houses to obtain government license and permits, which implied that there would be cases in which the application would be rejected. The ordinance, as Article 2 read, was applicable to printers across the Indies.⁶⁴³ In effect, the colonial authorities sought to get better control over the social and economic order by imposing stronger regulations on business in the colony, particularly in the printing industry.

As a confidential letter of 1935 from the Director of Department of Economic Affairs, G. H. C. Hart, demonstrated, the new regulation on print business regulations represented an attempt to confine the expansion of Japan's influence in the field.⁶⁴⁴ He even used the word "fear" (*vrees*) regarding the establishment of Japanese printing houses in the Indies. Those Japanese printing houses, Hart continued, potentially could destroy major companies. As he saw it, this danger derived from the fact that no effective regulation controlling the establishment of new publishing companies had existed up until now. For Hart, the new regulations were meant to protect existing

⁶⁴¹ Mr. 204x/1935.

⁶⁴² *Sin Tit Po* provided the Malay translation of the ordinance on its April 11, 1935 issue. "Reglementeering Drukkerij," *Sin Tit Po*, April 11, 1935.

⁶⁴³ Mr. 204x/1935.

⁶⁴⁴ De Directeur van Economische Zaken (G.H.C. Hart), "Toepassing van bedrijfsreglementeering op drukkerijen," No. 69/A.Z.I. Geheim, January 30, 1935, in Mr. 204x/1935.

printing and publishing companies and by so doing to prevent Japan's influence from penetrating in this field.

In fact as reported by the newspaper *Sin Tit Po*, in 1933 Japan was aggressively trying to establish its printing houses in Semarang.⁶⁴⁵ In the same year, the printing house, "Astra," had already started its business at Gang Pinggir and was now waiting for the permission from the government. Although its request for permission had been once rejected, this time it tried by using the name of the Chinese from Formosa (Taiwan). There was also report of yet another Japanese printer looking for a place to start his business. Semarang was an ideal city for the Japanese, according to *Sin Tit Po*, because the kretek cigarettes factories were located nearby.⁶⁴⁶

The confidential reports from Bureau for East Asian Affairs give more detailed information on the development described in the *Sin Tit Po* news coverage. The Bureau's ninth report issued in 1933 identified the name of a big printing company in Semarang.⁶⁴⁷ The company was a joint venture of the Printer Morikawa in Osaka, the Hamada Printing Press Factory in Tokyo, and Kato & Co. from Kobe. Its capital was f 50,000 and it employed Japanese. The report also indicated that its capital was equivalent to a Dutch newspaper, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, in Semarang. Indies Chinese newspapers such as *Sin Tit Po* and *Sin Po* fiercely protested the new "intruder" (*indringer*), and *Sin Tit Po* threatened to boycott the new Japanese printing company.

In addition to the matter of Japanese printing houses, the Bureau's report also described a rumor, saying that Japanese government was secretly subsidizing Indonesian newspapers. The police apparently had begun its investigation on this

⁶⁴⁵ "Drukkerij Djepang: Sebagai djamoer di moesin oedjan," *Sin Tit Po*, August 24, 1933.

⁶⁴⁶ "Drukkerij Djepang: Sebagai djamoer di moesin oedjan," *Sin Tit Po*, August 24, 1933.

⁶⁴⁷ "Mededeelingen Chineesche Zaken," No. 9, 1933, in Mr. 1110x/1933.

allegation. This news became the cover story of *Pewarta Deli* in August 22, 1934,⁶⁴⁸ in which the editor explicitly said that Japan tried to subsidize Indonesian papers in order to disseminate Japan's propaganda. Because of this allegation, the confidential report continued, PID had started its investigation to "open the secret of Indonesian press companies" (*ingin boeka rahsia peroesahaan2 pers Indonesia*) to determine if any companies had received secret money (*fonds rahsia*) from the Japanese government. The article even argued that it was the obligation of PID to investigate Japan's political slogan – Asia for the Asian nation – because of the threat the slogan would pose to the Indies government if it succeeded in gaining the people's sympathy. The editor was certain that Japan subsidized some Indonesian newspapers, so PID needed to find out which newspapers were under Japan's influence.

In order to understand the economic circumstances surrounding printing houses, the Department of Economic Affairs launched an investigation. In March 1935, for the first time ever the Dutch made a list of printing houses (not publishers) operating in the Indies.⁶⁴⁹ The list was compiled as the supplement document no. 3 in verbal no. 35 dated 26 March 1935, which is equivalent to the secret mail report no. 204 in the year of 1935. It records 305 printing houses from 74 cities. Among others, 44 printing houses are located in Batavia, followed by 24 in Soerabaja, 21 in Bandoeng, 16 in Soerakarta, 14 in Medan, 10 in Padang and Semarang.

Other than this government-made list several other sources of data on publishers, printing-houses, and bookshops in the Indies also exist. *Handboek voor cultuur- en handels-ondernemingen in Nederlandsch-Indies*, published yearly by J. H.

⁶⁴⁸ "Kapitaal Yapan masoek kedalam peroesahaan soerat kabar Indoneia?: Politieke Inlichtingendienst asjik mentjari keterangan berhoeboeng dengan kekoeatiran itoe," *Pewarta Deli*, August 22, 1934.

⁶⁴⁹ "Overzicht der mutaties in het drukkersbedrijf gedurende de jaren 1933 en 1934" in 204x/35 in Vb. 26-3-35-31 Bijlage: 4.

de Bussy in Amsterdam is a useful source.⁶⁵⁰ As the title clearly shows, this is a list-book on cultural and commercial firms and shops. According to the 1910's edition, there were 72 publishers, printing-houses, and bookshops existed in 24 cities in the Indies. Most of these were located in major cities in Java and owned by Dutch and Eurasians judging from the Dutch-sounding names of their listed owners. Twenty-four years later, the *Handboek*'s 1934 edition shows that the number of publishing related shops jumped from 72 to one 178; the number of cities in which publishing-related business were operating had jumped from 24 to 37, due largely to the economic development that had taken place in Sumatra.⁶⁵¹

An even more important piece of information offered in the same mail report is a list titled "General Mutations of Printing Business in the Years of 1933 and 1934."⁶⁵² This is a listing of private printing houses that either began their business or closed down in the years 1933 and 1934. As the listing shows, in the course of two years, some 35 new printing houses started business in the Indies, while 30 printing houses were forced to close down. Once-major printing houses that produced many books and periodicals in the Indies – including the likes of Drukkerij "Minerva" in

⁶⁵⁰ *Handboek voor cultuur- en handels-ondernemingen in Nederlandsch-Indies* (Amsterdam: J.H. de Bussy, yearly).

⁶⁵¹ But different sources give different numbers. According to *The New Commercial Directory of the Dutch East Indies* published by Nam Tiong Boek Handel in Batavia in 1932, there were 154 booksellers, publishers, and printing-houses in the Indies. *The New Commercial Directory of the Dutch East Indies of 1932* (Batavia: Nam Tiong Boek Handel, 1932). Since the directory mainly focuses on Dutch and Chinese related commercial firms and shops, it lacks the number of Indonesian business activities, and covers only 20 major cities. An address book of companies in the Indies, *Alegemeen Handelsadresboek van Nederlandsch-Oost Indies 1938-1939* published by Nederlandsche Siemens Maatschappij in Batavia/Soerabaia in 1939 shows that there were 57 bookshops/booksellers and 192 printing houses existing in 47 cities. *Alegemeen Handelsadresboek van Nederlandsch-Oost Indies 1938-1939* (Batavia/Soerabaia: Nederlandsche Siemens Maatschappij, 1939). 9 cities are listed from Sumatra, 3 from Celebes, two from Borneo, 1 from Sabang, and the other 23 cities are located in Java. Among others, Batavia had 31 printing houses followed by Soerabaja (23), Bandoeng (15), Semarang (12), Medan (11), and Malang (10). Another address book titled *Nieuw Adresboek van Geheel Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batavia: G. Kolff) is also an important source to crosscheck the *Alegemeen Handelsadresboek*. Unfortunately the National Archive in Indonesia only has the copy from 1920.

⁶⁵² Overzicht der mutaties in het drukkersbedrijf gedurende de jaren 1933 en 1934 from 204x/35 in V 26-3-35-31 Bijlage: 4.

Bandoeng, Drukkerij “Hoa Saing In Kiok,” “Albrecht” and “Bintang Hindia” in Batavia, Drukkerij “Han Po” in Palembang, Drukkerij “Minerva” and “Warna Warta” in Semarang, Drukkerij “Excelsior” in Soekaboemi and Soerabaja – ceased operation in the years 1933 and 1934. In some cases, such as that of Drukkerij “Brotoamiprodjo” in Pamekasan and Drukkerij “Apollo,” newer publishing and printer houses were in business for less than two years. Clearly, the print market of the early 1930s was a very competitive scene.

The timing of the Dutch colonial government’s survey of Indies printing houses is suggestive. By 1934 the Indonesian nationalist movement had been well confined by the secret police, and almost at the same time many private publishers and printing houses went bankrupt due to the economic depression that had badly hit the Indies from 1932 onwards. Oddly enough, the middle of the 1930s also saw a period when a new trend in the launching of many new printing houses emerged. Obviously, the print media market was perceived to be a good profit-generating prospect for private enterprises, and in fact the number and variety of periodicals and publications flourished in that period.

Table 9-1: General Mutations of Printing Business
in the Years of 1933 and 1934

	Opening business		Closing business	
City	Name	Year	Name	Year
Bandoeng	Sin Ah	1934	Minerva	1933
	Galoenggoeng	1934	Maks v/d Klits	1934
	Soekarja	1934		
Batavia	Paseban	1933	Hoa Siang In Kiok	1933
	Milly	1933	Said Abdullah	1933
	Kwee Tjeng Yan	1933	Artisto	1933
	Gouw Thio Goan	1933	Dunlop	1933
	Lie Ie Tjoeng	1933	Milly	1934
	Elsevier	1934	Albrecht	1934
	Djawa Barat	1934	Plantjin	1934
	Tan Hin Hoo	1934	Bintang Hindia	1934

Table 9-1 (Continued)				
	Maisin Chemical Factory	1934		
Blitar			Liem Liang Djwan	1934
Cheribon	Affif	1934	Tiong Hoa	1934
Djocjakarta	Fabriek Negresco	1933	Tan Gwat Bing	1934
	Fadjar	1933	Bob	1934
	Kita	1933		
	Het Boekendepot	1934		
Kediri	Quick	1934		
Makassar	Lie A Liat	1933		
Malang	Mars	1934		
Palembang	Ebeling	1933	Han Po	1933
	Ban Seng Hoat	1933	Ind. Mij. Palembang	1933
Pamekasan	Brotoamiprodjo	1933	Brotoamiprodjo	1933
Parakan	Ong Tiau w Hok	1934		
Pekalongan	Fortuna	1933		
Poerwokerto	Apollo	1933	Apollo	1934
	Logawa	1934		
	Trio	1934		
Salatiga	Three-onderneming Ampel	1933		
Semarang	Astra	1933	Minerva	1933
	Kongsie Djit Po	1933	Warna Warta	1933
	Smeroe	1933	Van Sohijndel	1933
			Pang Khoen Liem	1934
Samarinda	Paramount Press	1934	Kramat	1933
Soekaboemi	Van Moosdijk	1934	Persaudaraan	1933
			Excelsior	1933
Soerabaja	Litera	1934	Helios	1933
			Excelsior	1933
			Reproductie Co.	1933
			Illustra	1933
			Java Nippo Sha	1934

The date in the above survey clearly indicate that the printing business still attracted many newcomers even as some established printing houses were forced to shut down because of the intense competition. It also suggests that the print market was growing and offered some opportunities to make money.

From this data it is possible to begin to understand why the government was moved to undertake its survey of the publishing industry in 1935 – which is to say at a time when the Indonesian nationalist movement had already been virtually contained, rather than years earlier, in the 1920s, when the movement and the printing industry that helped carry it first began to flourish. It is reasonable to assume that the timing of the government's survey was shaped by factors related to the print market, more specifically by the important expansion in the print market that took place in the 1930s. To recall some of the data cited earlier in this chapter, the number of weeklies was 108, increasing by more than 30 publications from the previous year, whereas the number of monthlies was 382, representing the addition of 130 new monthlies to the Indies publishing market. Many private publishers published various kinds of new periodicals and books; many private printing houses tried to slip into the publishing industry to look for profit. And more importantly, by 1935, the Dutch government no longer had a major influence on the print market and thereby could exert almost no control on the market itself.

The next question would then be: Who was competing in the printing market in the latter half of the 1930s? From the table above it appears that indigenous enterprises were entering the competitive printing market during this period. But I have some doubts about this observation. From my experience in examining *IPO* (The Survey of Indigenous and Malay Chinese Press),⁶⁵³ when the Dutch counted the numbers of Malay periodicals, they were looking exclusively at the periodicals' publishers. In other words, they disregarded those businesses involved in printing the publications. I would argue then, that not until the Japanese began to enter printing business in the 1930s did the Dutch government become motivated to document the printing houses of the Indies, which it finally did in its survey of 1935.

⁶⁵³ See Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

If one focuses on the printing houses of the newly published periodicals, it is possible to find some cases in which Chinese printers assisted in printing the periodicals of indigenous publishers. Soerabaja, the second largest publishing center in the Indies, provides some of the most interesting cases, because in the arena of the publishing industry, the Indonesian nationalists and Indies Chinese intellectuals of Soerabaja had worked very closely together since the 1920s. For instance, *Sendjata Indonesia* (Indonesian Weapon), whose editor-in-chief was Marsoedi, a leading nationalistic figure in Soerabaja in the late 1920s, was printed by Sin Jit Po, and *Perasa'an Kita* (Our Opinion), published by Persatoean Ra'jat Indonesia Sedjati, was printed by Nam Yong. Both Sin Jit Po and Nam Yong printing houses were owned by Chinese, as is obvious from their names. As these examples show, in order to understand the dynamic relationship between various ethnic groups in the print market, it is better to pay more attention on the printing houses. And in the case of Java, there was not much competition among private indigenous, Chinese, and Dutch publishers. Rather a primary factor shaping the publishing scene in Soerabaja was a common interest in working together against Balai Poestaka's state-backed project in the market.

By contrast, Sumatra gives us somehow a different story, as indigenous printers in those cities, led by Medan in the 1930s, indigenous printers played dominant roles in the publishing industry. Medan and Padang, led by Adi Negoro with some 40 of the most popular writers, produced many series of *roman pitjisan*, which were considered and categorized as periodicals. Printing houses such as N. V. Handel Mij. & Electriche Drukkerij "Sjarikat Tapanoeli" and Mij. Sumatrasche Drukkerij contributed to the development of periodicals in the Sumatran scene. It was almost impossible for indigenous people in publishing industry in Sumatra to co-operate with ethnic Chinese publishers and printers, because *roman pitjisan*-related

articles sometimes sound anti-Chinese in terms of “proper” Malay language. Writers as well as publishers and printers of *roman pitjisan* were generally Indonesian nationalists, relying on Minangkabau’s local, commercial and school networks.⁶⁵⁴

However, what is interesting in this quick comparison is that private publishers and printers in Java did not literally compete with those in Sumatra as there was limited overlap in terms of their actual print market and reading public. In Java the main competitive target of private publishers was Balai Poestaka, while the so-called Chinese-Malay literature was widely read there; in Sumatra since neither Balai Poestaka or Chinese-Malay literature was overwhelmingly dominant, indigenous publishers and writers ruled the market. The latter were quite nationalistic in orientation, while their readers were deeply influenced by modern Islamic views. That is why leading *roman pitjisan* writers included figures like Hamka, Joesoef Sou’yb, Tamar Djaja, and the like.

Furthermore, some similarities can be pointed out. On both Java and Sumatra, private publishers imagined their market to be limited to the growing print market in the Indies. In this sense, they appeared to have an incipient consciousness about the territoriality of the state. More importantly, one of their main concerns had to do with making money through the print market. Also, the content of the published periodicals was carefully selected. The main focus was on international as well as local news and affairs and the frequent inclusion of detective stories. As a rule, the periodicals tried to avoid commentary on “national” politics, except on the affairs of the People’s Council, which was the only terrain on which the Indies press was allowed to freely report.

In short, under a regime of political repression and apparent social stability, and yet with little institutional censorship, the print market grew drastically in the last

⁶⁵⁴ See Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

fifteen years of Dutch colonial era. At the same time, the capitalistic oriented publishers, writers, printers, and distributors contributed to the development of some kind of “national” territorial mapping. Although the Indies state failed to install successful institutional censorship in service of its political and security-related priorities during this period, the development and spread of capitalistic ventures contributed to the creation of a feeling of nationalism with particular local flavors as well as, ironically, self-censored publications in the last years of the Dutch period.

Polemics on Indies Chinese – 1934

The middle of the 1930s saw sweeping changes regarding the political position among the Indies Chinese. Understanding this drastic change requires examining a polemic that occurred in 1934 on the Chinese status in the colony. The polemic revealed how the Indies Chinese identified themselves and how Indonesian intellectuals thought of them.

The polemic evolved over a controversial issue on how the Chinese should position themselves in the Indies society. The discussion took place in the middle of 1934 and was reported in detail in a colonial confidential report.⁶⁵⁵ At this time, the Indonesian nationalist movement had been crushed and prominent leaders such as Soekarno, Mohammad Hatta, and Sutan Sjahrir were exiled to prison camps. In other words, nationalist political activism had been contained and no more mobilizational politics was evident. Indonesian nationalists were faced with the need to change the form of their activism in order to avoid government oppression. Under such political calmness, the polemic on Indies Chinese challenged how Indonesian nationalists imagined the future Indonesia.

⁶⁵⁵ “Uitgefte nieuw Maleisch-Chineesche dagblad Matahari,” Mededeelingen Chineesche Zaken, No. 8, 1934, in Mr. 1075x/1934.

It started in August 1934 when Kwee Hing Tjiat published his article “Baba Dewasa” (“Mature Indies Chinese”) in the daily *Mata Hari*. *Mata Hari* was a Chinese-Malay newspaper based in Semarang, and Kwee Hing Tjiat was its chief editor. Born in 1891 in Soerabaja, Kwee was educated at Dutch schools, and then worked at the administrative division of Firma Kian Gwan, a large Chinese-owned company.⁶⁵⁶ In September 1911 he managed to publish the weekly, *Asia*, in Soerabaja. In October 1913 after abandoning *Asia*, he founded a new weekly, *Bok Tok*, which became *Tjhoen Tjhioe* in 1914. In 1915 he left *Tjhoen Tjhioe* and moved to Jogjakarta where he published the weekly *Palita* (Lantern). Later that year he was invited by Hauw Tek Kong to Batavia-based *Sin Po* to become its deputy editor-in-chief, and later became its chief editor. *Sin Po* by 1915 had been a well-established Malay-Chinese newspaper that took a Chinese nationalist line and was sympathetic to the Republic Government of China. By working for *Sin Po*, Kwee developed his nationalistic ideals and expressed his opinion that the Chinese in the Indies were truly nationals of China, not imperial subjects of the Netherlands. In 1918 he left *Sin Po* and took charge of a Chinese firm in Bali.

As a businessman, Kwee often travelled to China and Japan, and then was stationed in Europe for three years from 1920. While staying in Europe, he continued contributing articles to *Sin Po*, and often criticized Dutch policy toward the Indies Chinese. In 1921 he published a book *Doea Kepala Batoe* (Two Obstinate) in Berlin.⁶⁵⁷ The book gave a history of Chinese movement in the Indies, and implied

⁶⁵⁶ The career of Kwee Hing Tjiat relies on Leo Suryadinata, *Peranakan's Search for National Identity: Biographical Studies of Seven Indonesian Chinese* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1993), pp. 17-24.

⁶⁵⁷ The book describes the history of Chinese nationalism in the Indies, and in particular depicts two political streams among the Indies Chinese in the 1920s Indies. “Two obstinate” were represented by two leading Chinese; Dr. Yap Hong Tjoen, the president of the CHH, who pursued the status of Dutch subject, whereas Tjoe Bou San, the editor-in-chief of *Sin Po*, promoted Chinese nationalism in the Indies. Yap had a close relationship with the Dutch Sinologist, P. H. Fromberg, who was the advisor for the Chinese Affairs as well as an advocate for the Indies Chinese. “Fromberg and the Chinese

that Chinese nationalism was the right way and could not be suppressed. His aggressive discourse was not welcomed by the Dutch authorities, and hence he was not allowed to come back to the Indies. The official excuse was that Kwee did not possess a proper visa to reenter the Indies, because he had travelled to Europe with a Chinese passport. Upon his arrival in Java, he was deported to Canton and then moved to Shanghai where he spent the next ten years. But raised and educated in Java, he did not understand Chinese and soon felt alienated in his ancestral land. So he kept his attention on Java.

In the early 1930s, Kwee met Oei Tjong Hauw in Shanghai. Oei Tjong Hauw was a wealthy Indies Chinese, son of the late tycoon Oei Tiong Ham, and successor to the Oei Tiong Ham Concern, also known as Firma Kian Gwan. In March 1934, with Oei Tjong Hauw's guarantee, Kwee Hing Tjiat was able to return to Java and obtained the position of editor-in-chief at a new daily *Mata Hari* in Semarang, funded by Oei Tiong Ham Concern. Upon his arrival in Soerabaja, Kwee travelled throughout Java to learn about local conditions and made acquaintance with prominent journalists such as Parada Harahap, Saëroen, and Bakri Suraatmadja, who later became regular contributors to *Mata Hari*. The Boen Liang was the head agency of the newspaper in Soerabaja, while Liem Koen Hian, the leader of the new Indonesian Chinese Party (*Partai Tionghoa Indonesia*, PTI) served as the representative in Batavia.⁶⁵⁸

Movement,” in Leo Suryadinata (ed.), *Political Thinking of the Indonesian Chinese, 1900-1977: A Sourcebook* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1979), pp. 17-24.

⁶⁵⁸ “Uitgefte nieuw Maleisch-Chineesche dagblad Matahari,” Mededeelingen Chineesche Zaken, No. 8, 1934, in Mr. 1075x/1934. Liem Koen Hian recalled the fact that many Chinese were eager to fight together with Indonesians for Indonesia's independence. But those who joined the party were often called up by the local PID. This intimidation happened all cities where the PTI had its branches, and resulted in discouraging people to keep their membership with the party. See Liem Kone Hian's speech of July 11, 1945, at the Investigative Committee for the Preparation of Indonesia's Independence in 1945 in A. B. Kusuma, *Lahirnya Undang-Undang Dasar 1945: Memuat Salinan Dokumen Otentik Badan Oentoek Menyelidiki Oesaha2 Persiapan Kemerdekaan* (Depok: Fakultas Hukum Unviersitas Indonesia, 2004), pp. 268-269.

Kwee's long exile in China had changed his attitude about Indies Chinese. He realized that he actually had more affinities with the Indies than with China. He was not a promoter of Chinese nationalism any longer, but turned himself into a pro-Indonesian spokesperson among the Indies Chinese community. He was famous for his anti-Dutch action and discourses.⁶⁵⁹ Changing political identity was not unusual among Indies Chinese in the colonial era,⁶⁶⁰ and Kwee Hing Tjiat provided a representative case. In the inaugural issue of *Mata Hari*, he wrote the aforementioned essay "Baba Dewasa." It expressed his longings, claiming that *baba* (indigenized Chinese) were prepared to assimilate into the Indonesian society.

The clock has struck, and the Baba must take their place as sons of Indonesia by preparing to carry out all the duties, together with everyone who worships Indonesia as his Mother and the Dutch Government acting as trustee. The Baba did not choose their place. They were fated to stand up there, based on spiritual rights and as medicine for all the complications and dualisms, but also based on their vital economic interests. [...]

Any kind of Baba movement will not progress until the political position of the Baba in Indonesia is expressed, established, and made the basis of their livelihood. Without this foundation, the Baba economy will fall apart, and with it, all affairs.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁹ "Uitgefte nieuw Maleisch-Chineesche dagblad Matahari," Mededeelingen Chineesche Zaken, No. 8, 1934, in Mr. 1075x/1934.

⁶⁶⁰ Another representative person was Liem Koen Hian, who was the chief editor of *Sin Tit Po* and the founder of PTL.

⁶⁶¹ Kwee Hing Tjiat, "Baba Dewasa," *Mata Hari*, August 1, 1934, in Suryadinata, *Peranakan's Search for National Identity*, pp. 24-25. I cite the article from Suryadinata's newer but somehow different translation from his former translation. The previous translation appeared in Suryadinata, *Political Thinking of the Indonesian Chinese 1900-1977*, pp. 62-63.

According to Kwee Hing Tjiat, the Indies Chinese were ready to assimilate into the Indonesian society, including carrying out the duties it entailed, and therefore it was the Indonesians' turn to show whether or not they accepted the Chinese. If that was the only message, then the article would not have been a problem. But it was the one phrase "sons of Indonesia" that stirred a controversy among Indonesian intellectuals. The phrase originally referred exclusively to indigenous Indonesians (*Indonesiër*), which were assumed to not include the Chinese.

There emerged two groups of Indonesian intellectuals in response to Kwee's article. Those who supported his argument included prominent Indonesian intellectuals such as Dr. Soetomo, Mr. Singgih, and Dr. Satiman. They shared his opinion that if the Chinese sincerely expressed their wish to assimilate totally, Indonesians would be prepared to accept them as sons of Indonesia.⁶⁶² Dr. Satiman added that the open acceptance from the indigenous community had to be followed with a promise from the Chinese, that is, the latter must feel and act as Indonesians, and work for the Indonesian homeland.⁶⁶³ A Jogjkarta-based *Sedio Tomo* expressed the same argument as Dr. Satiman's, basically by supporting Kwee Hing Tjiat's claim, and made the following comment:

If such a stream [of thought] really comes out of a pure heart, is proven with the willingness to fulfill all duties towards Indonesia, and the attitude towards sons of the soil [indigenous Indonesians] is similar to that towards the Baba,

⁶⁶² Suryadinata, *Peranakan's Search for National Identity*, pp. 24-30.

⁶⁶³ *Djawa Tengah Review*, August 1934, p. 622, in Suryadinata, *Peranakan's Search for National Identity*, pp. 25, 33.

we believe that we Indonesians will open our doors as widely as possible to accept them.⁶⁶⁴

The article maintained that the Indies Chinese were not yet Indonesian at the moment, but left open the possibility for them to assimilate into the Indonesian society. In order to do so, they were encouraged to establish a close relationship with Indonesians. *Sedio Tomo*'s view however endorsed Kwee Hing Tjiat's argument that the Chinese assimilation might happen in one generation. Kwee had written:

We also feel that within one generation or 30 years Baba will have assimilated into the people of Indonesia, as in the Philippines, Siam and other such countries, except for a few sour-grapes who must be kicked out.

But his opponents did not buy this vision. Criticism against Kwee derived from the common perception of the current Chinese position. The opposition consisted of Sjamsoeddin's *Bahagia* (Semarang), Jogjakarta's daily *Oetoesan Indonesia*, Soerabaja's *Soeara Oemoem*, for which Sanoesi Pané was the chief editor, and Saëroen's *Pemandangan* from Batavia. All of these were major newspapers from four main cities in Java. *Bahagia* responded to Kwee by expressing doubts regarding Chinese people's intentions:

The advantage is, for example, if Indies Chinese are willing to carry out their duties wholeheartedly, to fight together with indigenous sons of Indonesian towards the independence of Indonesia. Thus, here we acquire comrades in

⁶⁶⁴ The essay was originally published in *Sedio Tomo*, and later reprinted in *Djawa Tengah Review*, August 1934, p. 611. Surayadinata's translation is based on *Djawa Tengah Review* version. Surayadinata, *Peranakan's Search for National Identity*, p. 25.

our struggle. However, they will not carry out their duties free of charge, will they? Once they become sons of Indonesia, then they are entitled to demand the same rights as indigenous Indonesians, aren't they? [...] Should they be given the right to land ownership when they are very strong economically? It is here that a conflict of interest arises. We cannot prevent them from demanding the right, since they are regarded as having become sons of Indonesia. [...] As for us, since we do not agree that the right to land ownership and other rights of the people should be given to other parties (because our people have very few rights and they are also poor), therefore we say: let the Chinese remain sons of China. We are Indonesians, you are Chinese! We really have different nationalities, but we are both ... Asians!⁶⁶⁵

The foundation of *Bahagia*'s opposition to Chinese assimilation consisted of suspicion mixed with an economic inferiority complex towards the Chinese. For *Bahagia* it was obvious that if Indonesians accepted the Chinese, the latter would simply take over the economy. In order to protect Indonesians' interest, it contended that the Chinese were fundamentally different from Indonesians. The newspaper needed to find an excuse not to accept the Chinese, thus it cited the "fact" that Indonesians and Chinese were inherently different in terms of nationality.

Indies Chinese were not known for ironclad solidarity either. There were those who endorsed this line of ethno-nationalistic argument and resisted Kwee Hing Tjiat's claim. They did not want to assimilate into the Indonesian society, because they had pursued either Dutch or Chinese patrons or felt more affinities with these groups. From their writings in such newspapers as *Siang Po* and *Sin Po*, they denied any

⁶⁶⁵ *Bahagia* reprinted in *Djawa Tengah Review*, August 1934, p. 613, in Suryadinata, *Peranakan's Search for National Identity*, p. 26.

obligation to fight for Indonesia's independence. They rather ridiculed Kwee Hing Tjiat's position as if it was a naïve dream. *Siang Po* commented "When the time comes for the promise to be fulfilled, will Mr. Kwee Hing Tjiat have the capability to mobilize his baba Chinese to struggle for the independence of the Indonesian homeland????,"⁶⁶⁶ while *Sin Po* said "Chickens and ducks resemble each other in many respects: they have two eyes, two feet, a pair of wings, and both of their eggs can be boiled, but to make chickens become ducks or the other way around is impossible."⁶⁶⁷

Interestingly, the debate took place based on different foundations. Kwee Hing Tjiat and his supporters looked at the future possibility for the Chinese to be assimilated into the Indonesian society, and took into account possible social change in the future. By contrast, his opponents rejected future assimilation and argued that fundamental differences between the two nations could never be fused. The legal definition of "foreign" nationals demonstrated such inherent differences. On the one hand, it reminded everyone of the fact that Indonesian political parties refused to accept Chinese membership after facing a severe crack down by the Indies state since the late 1920s. The banning of PKI that had included many Chinese associates in its membership prompted wider hesitation on part of Indonesian political parties' to accept Chinese member into their own organizations. On the other hand, it demonstrated the fact that many Indies Chinese were not willing to take part in the struggle for the independence of Indonesia. Rather they appeared to enjoy their social status afforded to them as Chinese in the colonial setting.

⁶⁶⁶ *Siang Po* reprinted in *Djawa Tengah Review*, p. 622, in Surayadinata, *Peranakan's Search for National Identities*, p. 28.

⁶⁶⁷ *Sin Po* reprinted in *Djawa Tengah Review*, p. 615, in Surayadinata, *Peranakan's Search for National Identities*, p. 29.

The polemic however revealed that there was a shared foundation even for different intellectual circles. First, the dispute developed through Malay language newspapers. This was a polemic not only between Indonesians and Chinese, but also among both the Indonesians themselves and the Chinese themselves. For Indonesians the issue was whether they were willing to accept the Chinese in their society, while for the Chinese the main point of the discussion was the question of whether or not to assimilate into the Indonesian society. The newspapers involved in the polemic were *Mata-Hari* (Semarang), *Bahagia* (Semarang), *Sedio Tomo* (Jogjakarta), *Oetoesan Indonesia* (Jogjakarta), *Soeara Oemoem* (Soerabaja), *Siang Po* (Batavia), and *Sin Po* (Batavia). Whether a newspaper endorsed Kwee Hing Tjiat's argument did not really matter. What was important was the fact that such polemic took place in the circle of Malay newspapers in Java. It showed that, as far as the Malay press was concerned, there was no barrier between Indonesians and Chinese. Rather it was common practice among journalists to communicate with each other by reading, supporting, and criticizing each other's newspapers.

This was not new. A Malay-language journalistic community demonstrated characteristics of the marketplace, because it depended on the size of its readership for its existence rather than on the ethnic make-up of its contributing writers. The case of a journalistic association established in October 1925 illustrates the point. On October 16, 1925, *Sin Jit Po* carried an article on the establishment of the Association of Journalists of Asia (*Journalistenbond Azia*).⁶⁶⁸ Tabrani from *Hindia Baroe* (New Indies) and Kwee Kek Beng from *Sin Po* served as the executive board; W. R. Soepratman from press bureau "Alpena"⁶⁶⁹ as the chairperson; Boen Joe On from

⁶⁶⁸ *Sin Jit Po*, October 16, 1925 (Th. 3, No. 82), L2-2.

⁶⁶⁹ "Alpena" or Algemene Pers Nieuws Agency (General Press News Agency) was established by Parada Harahap. Soepratman worked there as an assistant for Harahap. Bambang Sularto, *Wage Rudolf Supratman* (Jakarta: Proyek Biografi Pahlawan Nasional, Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1997), p. 76. Kwee Kek Beng recalled the fact that Harahap often made fun of

Perniagaan as the secretary; and R. S. Parindih from press bureau “Berita” as the treasurer. The committee was organized by Parada Harahap from *Bintang Hindia*, Ling Ying Ching from *Sin Po*, Khoe Boen Sioe from *Keng Po*, Bee Giau Tjoen from *Sin Po* and Achmad Wongsosewojo from “Volkslectuur” (Balai Poestaka). A week later, the structure was altered slightly.⁶⁷⁰ Tabrani D. I. was chosen as the chairperson, Kwee Kek Beng was the vice-chairperson, W. R. Soepratman became the secretary, Bong Jong On the first treasurer and R. S. Palindih the second treasurer. The committee members were Ling Yin Chen, Parada Harahap, Khoe Woen Sioe, Achmad Wongsosewojo, and Bee Giau Tjoen. The above-mentioned ten names were leading journalists of the time. Both indigenous and Chinese journalists were included. It is to be noted that different Asian “races” were represented in the Association. Although the association itself had purely journalistic intentions, its choice of the name “Azia” was political as it implied non-Western journalists. Whether one worked for government organizations or private ones was immaterial; rather, what mattered was being on the side of Asia. In fact, since the beginning of *Sin Jit Po*, R. M. Bintarti, who was a Eurasian, served as one of the two editors. A journalistic community in the 1920s, therefore, symbolized the marketplace where interaction among different races existed as John Furnivall’s influential thesis of plural society maintained.⁶⁷¹

Second, as the debate demonstrated, the word “Asia” (Azia) was shared by both Indonesians and Chinese as a way to identify themselves. There was a sense of solidarity between Indonesians and Chinese who searched for their nationalisms.⁶⁷²

Soepratman, while the latter disclosed the former’s secrets. Kwee Kek Beng, *Doea Poeloe Lima Tahun sebagai Wartawan 1922-1947* (Batavia: Kuo, 1948), p. 36.

⁶⁷⁰ *Sin Jit Po*, 24 October 1925 (Th 3, No. 89), L3-1.

⁶⁷¹ Furnivall, *The Netherlands India*.

⁶⁷² For the Chinese, being Chinese nationalists meant also to be anti-imperialist, a position that could be shared with Indonesian nationalists. A symbolic collaboration between Indonesian and Chinese intellectuals was evident in the way the Indonesian national anthem was conceived. The song “Indonesia,” whose writer and composer was W. R. Soepratman, was performed for the first time at the Second Indonesian Youth Congress in Batavia on October 28, 1928. On November 7, 1928, the Indonesian Study Club’s Soerabaja newspaper *Soeloeh Ra’jat Indonesia* (The Torch of Indonesian

They might have different nationalities, but they were similar to each other when compared to Westerners. This idea was expressed not only by those on the pro-assimilation side but also by those taking an anti-assimilation position. The analogy of chicken and duck by *Sin Po* and the proclamation “we are both Asians” by *Bahagia* supported this fact. As noted earlier, the above-mentioned Association of Journalists of Asia used “Asia” with political connotations in mind. The concept excluded Westerners and simultaneously united Asian people. This symbolism was well captured by the Japanese slogan, “Asia for Asians.” Considering the fact that Pan-Asianism had been established in part as an anti-Western ideology in the 1930s, the word “Asia” now became politically sensitive.

Persbreidel and the Chinese Press – 1935 and 1936

While Japanese cultural penetration became a serious political matter, the question of policing the Chinese press emerged in the middle of the 1930s. At the time, governors and residents were required to pay close attention to the Chinese language newspapers, which was a new task for them. In this period *persbreidel* was invoked as a matter of ensuring effective security and policing, and from 1934 the role and power of the Prosecutor General concerning *persbreidel* in the colonial administration expanded significantly.⁶⁷³

People) published the text of the song, while on November 10 the Chinese-Malay newspaper *Sin Po* printed the note and the text of the song. In 1929 Supratman changed the song title to “Indonesia Raya” (Great Indonesia) and turned it into a Gramophone record on the advice of Yo Kim Tjan. Panitia Penysusun Naskah Brosur Lagu Kebangsaan Indonesia Raya, *Brosur Lagu Kebangsaan Indonesia Raya* (Jakarta: Proyek Naskah Brosur Lagu Kebangsaan Indonesia Raya, 1972), pp. 37-38; Kwee Kek Beng, *Doea Poeloe Lima Tahon sebagai Wartawan*, p. 35.

⁶⁷³ In 1934 the Governor-General, the Prosecutor General and Director of Justice reached agreement in which the Prosecutor General would have the decisive position in determining *persbreidel*. “Uittreksel uit de Nota der Algemeene Secretarie: Schema politieke maatregelen. Persbreidel,” in Mr. 604x/1934.

On June 22, 1936, the Prosecutor General circulated a confidential letter to governors and residents across the Indies.⁶⁷⁴ The letter's contents were unusual. First, it urged governors and residents to as much as possible avoid applying *persbreidel* to Dutch newspapers. Second, the letter stated that if the need arose, translation services for non-Malay languages, especially in the case of Chinese newspapers, were available upon request. The letter ordered governors and residents to pay more attention to the Chinese press, in particular the Chinese language one, and the order was effective immediately. On June 24, the Prosecutor General also mailed out a confidential letter under the title of "*persbreidel*" to the Governor-General. Co-signed with the head of Political Information Service this letter informed the Governor-General of the order he had circulated two days before.⁶⁷⁵

The June 22 letter marked a turning point in the decade of *persbreidel*. It also highlights the degree to which, contrary to the conventional understanding, the Prosecutor General rather than the Governor-General was in charge of *persbreidel*. Finally, it also shows that Chinese language newspapers were the major targets of *persbreidel*. In April and May 1936, before the Prosecutor General's letter had ever circulated, two Chinese-Malay newspapers, the Padang-based *Radio* and the Batavia-based *Sin Po*, were slapped with the first phase of *persbreidel*. Two months after the letter, in August 1936, *Sumatra Bin Poh*, a Chinese language newspaper in Medan, received a warning of the first phase of *persbreidel*. Less than a year later, in June 1937, five Chinese newspapers received similar warning: Three Chinese language newspapers, *Sin Po* and *Thien Sung Yit Po* both in Batavia, and *Tay Kong Siang Po* in

⁶⁷⁴ Parket van de Procureur-General, no. 22/4243 A.P., De dd. Procureur-Generaal bij het Hoogrechtshof van Ned. Indië. Aan de Gouverneurs en Residenten in Nederlandsch-Indië en de Afdeelingshoofden in de Vorstenlanden in 618x/1936.

⁶⁷⁵ De dd. Procureur-Generaal bij het Hooggerechtshof van Ned. Indië op Last; Het Hoofd van Dienst der Algemeene Recherche, (w.g.) v.d. Most aan Zijne Excellentie den Gouverneur-Generaal van Nederlandsch-Indië, in 618x/1936.

Soerabaja; and two Chinese-Malay newspapers, *Sin Po* in Batavia and *Soeara Mataram* in Jogjakarta. In addition to *New China*, four Chinese-language newspapers, that is, *Sin Po*, *Sumatra Bin Poh*, *Thieng Sung Yit Po*, and *Tay Kong Siang Po*, were forced to cease publication due to the second phase of *persbreidel*. Evidently, the colonial authorities in Medan, Batavia, Soerabaja, and Jogjakarta did not waste their time to curb the local Chinese newspapers.

The timing of these *persbreidel* cases deserves our attention. The Chinese press had engaged in sporadic anti-Japanese discourse after Japan established its puppet Manchurian government in 1932. Such anti-Japanese campaigns intensified after July 1937 when the Sino-Japanese war broke out. Nine Chinese newspapers fell victim to *persbreidel* between April 1936 and June 1937. This development begs the question: Why, in early 1936, did the Dutch authorities “all of a sudden” begin to pay close attention to Chinese newspapers?

The shifting focus of *persbreidel* to the Chinese press did not run smoothly, because dealing with an external threat was novel to the Indies government. In 1936 a series of discussions among high Dutch colonial officials – the Governor-General, the Prosecutor General, the head of Justice, the head of PID, and the head of East Asian Affairs – revealed the rationale of *persbreidel*. The discussion addressed to what extent and on what basis certain Chinese newspapers should and could be punished with *persbreidel*.⁶⁷⁶ This discussion represented an intriguing turn of events. The Indies government’s shift towards applying *persbreidel* to Chinese newspapers turned out to have both international and domestic causes.

In 1936 the Bureau for East Asian Affairs made two contradictory but ultimately connected decisions about applying *persbreidel* against Chinese-owned

⁶⁷⁶ The pioneering work of Dutch colonial censorship by Mirjam Maters overlooks the transitional period of *persbreidel* from 1935 to 1936. Maters, *Van zachte wenk tot harde hand*, pp. 251-270.

newspapers. One decision dealt with *Sin Po* from Batavia, the most circulated Chinese-Malay newspaper in the Indies, while the other had to do with the Medan-based Chinese-language paper, *Sumatra Bin Poh*. It was the Bureau for East Asian Affairs that was consulted for *persbreidel* against the Chinese press as a whole. Both cases demonstrated two different logics in the way the authorities dealt with cases of Chinese owned newspapers.

In July 1936, the Bureau for East Asian Affairs investigated articles that *Sumatra Bin Poh* had published.⁶⁷⁷ Since its reestablishment in 1929, the paper had been known as a news organ of Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang and for its strong anti-Japanese stance.⁶⁷⁸ Because of its position, its chief editors got into frequent trouble with the Dutch authorities. Its history of uncompromising editorship led to *persbreidel* charges against the paper in July 1936. As early as 1930, its chief editor, Tan Meng Yuen contributed several articles that had communist inclination and elicited warnings by the authorities. Because the warnings appeared to have little impact in curbing Tan Meng Yuen's writing, he was refused extension of his visa.⁶⁷⁹ His successor, Thio Mie Kie, arrived in November 1931. Upon taking over the position, Thio wrote a series of anti-Japanese articles and he too received severe warnings from the police. The timing was important, because two months before he assumed the position, Japan had invaded Manchuria and established its puppet government. Given the context, it was no surprise that Thio Mie Kie produced aggressive anti-Japanese articles in his newspaper. But his articles appearing in *Sumatra Bin Poh*'s issues of October 19, 23 and November 11 drew special police

⁶⁷⁷ De Adviseur, Hoofd van den Dienst der Oost-Aziatische Zaken (A .H. J. Lovink) aan den Procureur-Generaal bij het Hooggerechtshof van Ned.-Indië, July 16, 1936, in 798x/1936.

⁶⁷⁸ Mantetsu Toa Chosa-Kyoku, *Ranryo Indo ni-okeru Kakyo*, p. 338.

⁶⁷⁹ All foreign residents in the Indies were subjected to an identification number. For instance, Tan Meng Yuen's was 6223-1322-5888. Whenever colonial documents referred him, the number had to be cited along with his name. If one had an alias, then a different number was provided beside the real name.

attention. Due to those writings he was sentenced for *persdelict* in February 1932 by the Lower Court in Medan, and imprisoned for 14 days.

In the same year, Thiao Hsiung Fang replaced Thio Mie Kie for the newspaper's editorship. Thiao Hsiung Fang followed the footsteps of his predecessors with his own anti-Japanese writings. He also received repeated warnings from authorities, that his article might have undesirable effect on the community. For unknown reasons, those warnings appeared to have no effect on Thiao Hsiung Fang either. Yet, again for unknown reasons, in 1935 he was allowed to extend his stay for the next six years by the Governor of the East Coast of Sumatra. In October of that year, however, the Prosecutor General advised the Governor to revoke Thiao Hsiung Fang's application, and on January 28, 1936, the Governor ordered to his removal from Medan to China.

In January 31 Shun Ie Tung temporarily took the position of chief editor of *Sumatra Bin Poh*. He continued the newspaper's tradition of what the Dutch considered to be strong anti-Japanese and/or extreme leftist (*links-extreme*) content.⁶⁸⁰ In particular, his articles on the Association for National Salvation in Beijing and the Association of Chinese Students for Salvation of the Fatherland drew the authorities' attentions. These associations were considered to have extreme leftist ideas with vigorous anti-Japanese attitudes, and *Sumatra Bin Poh*'s coverage of their activities appeared to take the form of a persistent anti-Japan(ese) campaigns. The newspaper had also neglected repeated warnings from the authorities, despite the removal and

⁶⁸⁰ This characterization of "extreme leftist" sounds odd because the Kuomintang to whom *Sumatra Bin Poh* were affiliated was fighting against the Communist Party of China along with Japanese military.

prosecution of its editors.⁶⁸¹ This attitude irritated the authorities, which temporarily suspended the newspaper in August 1936.⁶⁸²

The case of the Malay edition of *Sin Po* shows that confusion existed in how decisions about applying *persbreidel* were made and how the Chinese press was viewed in the middle of the 1930s. As with *Sumatra Bin Poh*, the authorities justified the application of *persbreidel* by compiling writings that reflected *Sin Po*'s stance over a period of time. In his confidential letter to the Governor-General dated on April 8, 1936, Prosecutor General Vonk said that *Sin Po* has gone too far with hostile writings against Japan and the Japanese.⁶⁸³ In order to make the case, the letter cited a series of anti-Japanese articles that dated back to October 1931 when *Sin Po*'s editors, Kwee Kek Beng and Go Tiauw Goan, launched a series of anti-Japanese articles. This was the period just after Japan had invaded Manchuria and was about to establish Manchukuo. Furthermore, the letter continued, in August 1932, *Sin Po* produced "hatred sowing" articles against a Chinese Association, *Chung Hwa Hui* (CHH). CHH consisted of Dutch-educated and wealthy Chinese who were in favor of Dutch rule and Dutch nationality, and thus were willing to participate in colonial political institutions such as the Volksraad. Since *Sin Po* was the champion of Chinese nationalism (including a claim on Chinese nationality for overseas Chinese), its political orientation put it in opposition to CHH. If the "crime" in question had to do with hate-sowing articles, the action invoked by the colonial government should have been a matter of *persdelict*. But the authorities found more controversial articles in *Sin Po* issues of 1934 onward, in particular the anti-Japanese cartoons and editorial

⁶⁸¹ De Adviseur, Hoofd van den Dienst der Oost-Aziatische Zaken (A. H. J. Lovink) aan den Procureur-Generaal bij het Hooggerechtshof van Ned.-Indië, July 16, 1936, in 798x/1936.

⁶⁸² Kommissoriaal van den 22sten Augustus no. 2888 geheim, 1936, Procureur-Generaal, August 15, 1936, no. 2468/A.P., in 798x/1936.

⁶⁸³ Parket van den Procureur-Generaal aan Gouverneur-Generaal, No. 1068/A.P. Geheim, April 8, 1936, in 341x/1936.

comments published in its February 3, 1934 and January 21, 1935 issues. These article caught the attention of the Prosecutor General. He had asked the Resident of Batavia to give warnings to the editorial board of *Sin Po*, while duly issued the warnings went unheeded. Although the Resident summoned Kwee Kek Beng in February and March of 1936, *Sin Po* still carried articles with anti-Japanese as well as anti-Western undertones.⁶⁸⁴

Because of this attitude, the Prosecutor General Vonk proposed the application of *persbreidel* to *Sin Po*, instead of prosecuting individual editors such as Kwee Kek Beng.⁶⁸⁵ At the same time, Vonk made it clear that the application of *persbreidel* should be confined to the Malay edition of *Sin Po*, because the Chinese edition had its own editors and thus far had not carried controversial articles. He explained his rationale, saying that the two editions should be considered separately, because the Chinese edition was for the Chinese immigrant traders (*Singkeh-Chineez*en), while the Malay edition targeted the Chinese-Dutch nationals (*de Chineez*en-*Nederlandsche onderdanen*). Although Vonk did not specify, this did not mean that the Chinese edition of *Sin Po* did not carry any anti-Japanese articles. Vonk was concerned far less about that than about the fact that the Malay edition had tried to stir up a Chinese nationalistic spirit among the Chinese-Dutch nationals.

The day after the above-mentioned confidential letter, on April 9, 1936, the Adviser and Head of the Bureau for East Asian Affairs, A. H. J. Lovink, circulated a confidential letter to support the Prosecutor General's proposal. In it Lovink introduced a brief summary of an article written by Kwee Kek Beng to show the stance being taken by the Malay *Sin Po*. This was the article that Kwee Kek Beng

⁶⁸⁴ Parket van den Procureur-Generaal aan Gouverneur-Generaal , No. 1068/A.P. Geheim, April 8, 1936, in 341x/1936.

⁶⁸⁵ Parket van den Procureur-Generaal aan Gouverneur-Generaal , No. 1068/A.P. Geheim, April 8, 1936, in 341x/1936.

contributed to *Koloniale Studiën*⁶⁸⁶ entitled “De Chineesche pers in Ned.-Indië” (The Chinese Press in the Netherlands Indies).⁶⁸⁷ According to Lovink’s summary, *Sin Po* (New Journal) was launched in October 1910, on the eve of the Chinese revolution. It contained progressive news along with a serialized popular novel titled *San Kuo Chi* (Romance of the Three Kingdoms). *Sin Po*, as the summary goes, focused on Dr. Sun Yat Sen and the revolutionary movement in China, and because of its political outlook became involved in a controversy with another Chinese-Malay newspaper, *Perniagaan*, which promoted Dutch nationality for Indies Chinese and participated in various representative bodies in the colony. Lovink reminded his colleagues in the colonial administration that in 1918 and 1919 *Sin Po* launched a campaign for the Indies Chinese to refuse the Dutch nationality based on the 1911 treaty signed between the Netherlands and China. Lovink contended that in propagating Chinese nationalism in the Indies and encouraging the Chinese to reject Dutch nationality, *Sin Po* did not hesitate to express anti-Dutch and anti-Western sentiments. Therefore, he concluded that the Malay *Sin Po* was worth being penalized with the first phase of *persbreidel*.

The Bureau for East Asian Affairs also explained how it perceived (and distinguished) Chinese language and Chinese-Malay language newspapers. On the one hand, it categorized *Sumatra Bin Poh* as a China-oriented radical newspaper. The Bureau was concerned about the newspaper because its radicality was rooted in strong nationalistic sentiments that drove vigorous anti-Japanese discourse. In this case the main readers were the immigrant Chinese traders who stayed in the Indies with foreigners.

⁶⁸⁶ Kwee Kek Beng, “De Chineesche pers in Ned.-Indië,” *Koloniale Studiën*, (Juni 1935), pp. 194-224.

⁶⁸⁷ This article later was translated into Japanese and published as a bookform. Kwee Kek Beng. *Ranryo ni okeru Kakyo no shimbun jigyo* (translated by Horino Masaaki), (Tokyo: Toa Kenkyu-syo, 1940).

On the other hand, however, the Bureau was far less worried about the Chinese edition of *Sin Po*, even though the latter was the most influential Chinese-language newspaper in the Indies and also promoted anti-Japan discourse and patriotic activities among the Indies Chinese.⁶⁸⁸ The Bureau was more concerned about the Malay edition of *Sin Po*, because it had been discouraging Indies Chinese to hold and/or apply for Dutch nationality. In this case the Chinese meant the so-called “*peranakan*” residents of the colony, who were born and raised in the Indies with Malay as their mother tongue. With the Netherlands Citizenship Act of 1910 these Chinese were accorded “Dutch subjecthood” and so were placed under the jurisdiction of the Indies state instead of China. This, then, was the heart of Lovink’s concerns about the impact of the writings in Malay-language *Sin Po*, that is, that the Indies Chinese might be persuaded to give up their Dutch subjecthood. His summary suggested that he perceived this attitude as anti-Dutch.

At a glance, Lovink’s argument did not appear to correspond with the reasoning that Prosecutor General Vonk developed for his case against *Sin Po*. Vonk instead was concerned about two points. One was the “hate-sowing” language that *Sin Po* had used against CHH; presumably it could induce hatred among Chinese people, in particular among Indies Chinese. The other point was the anti-Japanese articles in *Sin Po*. This latter point corresponded with the case against *Sumatra Bin Poh*, but the logic applied to the case of *Sin Po* was slightly different. Vonk argued that *Sin Po*’s articles might stir anti-Dutch and anti-Western attitude among the Indies Chinese. Thus it was this anti-Dutch and anti-Western sentiment that Lovink tried to highlight in his summary about *Sin Po*.

In short, in the case of *Sumatra Bin Poh*, the newspaper’s anti-Japanese discourse lay at the heart of the matter for colonial authorities in their decision to

⁶⁸⁸ Mantetsu Toa Chosa-Kyoku, *Ranryo Indo ni-okeru Kakyo*, p. 332.

invoke *persbreidel*, while for *Sin Po* its potential anti-Dutch undertones were considered the newspaper's dangerous elements. The former newspaper was penalized with the first phase of *persbreidel* on August 15, 1936,⁶⁸⁹ and *Sin Po*'s penalty was announced by the Council of Netherlands Indies on April 20, 1936.⁶⁹⁰

When between September and October of 1936, or about a half year after *Sin Po* received the first phase of *persbreidel*, the colonial authorities discussed the potential application of second phase of *persbreidel* to the Malay *Sin Po*, the argument had changed slightly. This time, the Prosecutor General, H. Marcella, initiated the discussion. As I have described earlier in this thesis, according to the colonial policy, the second phase of *persbreidel* was to be applied if after the first phase was issued, the attitude shown by the newspaper in question did not change. In a confidential letter to the Governor-General on October 3, 1936, Marcella explained that the application of *persbreidel* to the Malay *Sin Po* involved twofold issues.⁶⁹¹ Marcella cited a letter from the Consul General of China regarding the *Sin Po* case, which had expressed regret about the newspaper's problematic commentary along with a promise that the Consul General would see to it that an improvement in the quality of the newspaper's editors occurred. While referring to the letter, Marcella also made the point while under normal circumstances such promise would be acceptable, in the current period (*het huidige tijdsbestek*) it could not be justified. The term "current period" here may be taken to mean the unstable relations that prevailed between China and Japan. Marcella went on to say that *Sin Po* was known as a fierce defender of China's national interest, which in his opinion could disturb the bilateral relation between Japan and China, i.e., disturbance in the relations between China and Japan

⁶⁸⁹ Mr. 798x/1936.

⁶⁹⁰ Mr. 423x/1936.

⁶⁹¹ Parket van den Procureur-Generaal (Vonk), No. 3008/A.P. Geheim aan de Gouverneur-Generaal, in Mr. 1053x/1936.

had negative implications for the stability of Asia as a whole, including Southeast Asia. For instance, Marcella pointed out the fact that in its September 18 edition, *Sin Po* published articles and pictures commemorating the Mukden incident, which marked the beginning of Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1932. As this action demonstrated, the editors at *Sin Po* had not change their attitude against Japan, and therefore, argued Marcella, it was the time to apply the second phase of *persbreidel* to the newspaper.

The Advisor and Head of East Asian Affairs, J. B. de Wilde, responded immediately to the Prosecutor General. On October 5, 1936, De Wilde sent a confidential letter to the Governor-General.⁶⁹² As an expert, De Wilde argued that the contents of Chinese newspapers largely depended on the nature and seriousness of events in China, and the development of Chinese movement in Southeast Asia reflected the conditions in the mainland. He went on to say that the Sino-Japanese relation was heading in an alarming direction, which was in step with flourishing anti-Japanese propaganda in Chinese newspapers. This, according to De Wilde, could destabilize the society and therefore required the government to take actions to prevent undesirable consequences. On this basis, he strongly recommended that the Governor-General apply the second phase of *persbreidel* to *Sin Po*, as the government had done to *Sumatra Bin Poh* in August.

At this point the question of *persbreidel* against *Sin Po* turned into a diplomatic matter. On October 21, 1936, the First Secretary of Government J. M. Kiveron sent a personal and confidential letter regarding the possible application of *persbreidel* to *Sin Po*, addressed to the Chinese Consul General, Fartsan T. Sung.⁶⁹³ In his letter, Kiveron informed Sung that the Governor-General could find no reason

⁶⁹² Adviseur, Hoofd van Dienst der Oost-Aziatische Zaken (J. B. de Wilde) aan Gouverneur-Generaal, no. 4827/36 geheim, in Mr. 1053x/1936.

⁶⁹³ Mr. 1053x/1936.

to retract the decision regarding *Sin Po*. In his own letter to Kiveron, Sung noted that he shared the Indies government's view about *Sin Po* and the Chinese press in general. Sung was sensitive to the Indies government's growing concern about the potentially destabilizing effects of *Sin Po*'s anti-Japanese rhetoric, and had attempted to warn the newspaper to tone down its commentary.⁶⁹⁴ The Chinese Consul General had himself repeatedly warned the chief editor of the Malay *Sin Po*, as well as its Chinese edition, following personal talks with the Advisor and Head of East Asian Affairs, De Wilde. But *Sin Po* neglected Sung's warnings and continued publishing anti-Japanese articles. Sung expressed his regrets that the Chinese community in the Netherlands Indies was unable to understand why the Indies government had to be so cautious with all the Chinese newspapers, particularly in Medan and in Batavia.⁶⁹⁵

As Sung continued, editors of some Chinese newspapers in the Indies had their own opinions that challenged the Dutch view about their role and social impact. These editors pointed out that after the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, none of the Chinese immigrants in the Indies had clashed with any of the Japanese nationals there. There was no intention to cause troubles or difficulties for the Indies government either by boycotting Japanese goods or any other methods. Rather, these leaders of the Chinese press appreciated the effort by the government to undertake strict measures for the maintenance of peace and order in the colony. At the same time, however, being the intellectual class of "Chinese nationals" residing in the Indies, they also felt the obligation to open "the eyes of some of the leaders of the native

⁶⁹⁴ A personal and confidential letter from Consul General for China at Batavia (Fartsan T. Sung) to the General Secretary, Buitenzorg (J. M. Kiveron), in Mr. 1056x/1936.

⁶⁹⁵ A personal and confidential letter from Consul General for China at Batavia (Fartsan T. Sung) to the General Secretary, Buitenzorg (J. M. Kiveron), in Mr. 1056x/1936. Picking up only these two cities sound odd because Sun excluded another important city, Soerabaja, in terms of the Chinese press and anti-Japanese discourse. The Chinese Consulate must have known that a Soerabaja-base Chinese language newspaper, *Tay Kong Siang Po* had been received warnings when this confidential letter was written, as the confidential letter of the Prosecutor General dated October 26, 1936, mentioned.

population, for example, Dr. Soetomo, President of the Great Indonesia Party (Partai Indonesia Raja), who is reportedly a pro-Japanese native leader in Java.”

After introducing the editors’ view, Sung concluded that he would exert his utmost to cooperate with the Indies government to maintain peace and order among his nationals. At the same time, he did not forget to shift the blame to the Japanese aggressive policy towards the militarily weak Chinese nation, which had affected the editors’ view, and thus begged the Indies government for a more lenient attitude towards them.

This letter from the Chinese Consul General appeared to have some influence on the Prosecutor General Marcella when making decisions concerning *persbreidel* against Chinese newspapers. On October 26, 1936, Marcella wrote an urgent confidential letter to the Governor-General.⁶⁹⁶ In it he discussed two Chinese language newspapers, *Sin Po* in Batavia and *Tay Siang Kong Po* in Soerabaja. In the case of *Sin Po* he argued that none of the prejudice towards other people that characterized the writings of *Sumatra Bin Poh* was evident, while in the case of *Tay Siang Kong Po* he contended that an administrative warning much like that issued against the Chinese *Sin Po* would be enough because no hateful article was detected.

In both cases, Marcella basically rejected the recommendation made by De Wilde and the request from the Resident of Soerabaja. Given that the usual pattern was for the Prosecutor General to readily consent to the recommendation and request made by the Bureau for East Asian Affairs, the Governors and the Residents regarding *persbreidel*, it appeared that something had changed his mind. One factor may have been Marcella’s understanding that the state of Sino-Japanese relations was actually

⁶⁹⁶ Parket van den Procureur-Generaal (Marcella) No. 3285/A.P. Geheim. Spoed. aan de Gouverneur-Generaal, October 26, 1936, in Mr. 1053x/1936.

less alarming than had been the case in the recent past. At the same time, however, it should be noted that he continued to be apprehensive about the Malay *Sin Po*.⁶⁹⁷

The Prosecutor General did not waste his time. The very next day, October 27, 1936, Marcella sent another urgent confidential letter to the Governor-General.⁶⁹⁸ It contained a strong recommendation for the application of the second phase of *persbreidel* to the Malay *Sin Po*. Recurring anti-Japanese articles that the newspaper carried were the motive. An article in the September 30, 1936 edition called for a boycott of the Olympic Games in Tokyo scheduled for 1940. Another article on October 1 argued that using military power was the only way to end Japan's infringement of China's sovereignty. An article on October 3 even contended that a war between China and Japan could no longer be prevented. While printing these articles, *Sin Po* continued to receive warnings from the authorities, and yet it did not stop publishing similar kind of anti-Japan(ese) writings.⁶⁹⁹ By then the authorities had realized that not only the Chinese language newspapers, but also the Malay language ones could provoke anti-Japanese campaigns. On top of it, the prediction that the Sino-Japanese war was inevitable made the colonial authorities worried about possible reactions from Japan.

The communication among the Governor-General, the Prosecutor General, and the Advisor and Head of Bureau for East Asian Affairs that I described above reveal some facts about *persbreidel*. First, there is no question that the rationale for the application of *persbreidel* on Chinese newspapers had to do with the content of newspaper articles. It is important to note that anti-Japanese articles began to appear

⁶⁹⁷ Parket van den Procureur-Generaal (Marcella) No. 3285/A.P. Geheim. Spoed. aan de Gouverneur-Generaal, October 26, 1936, in Mr. 1053x/1936.

⁶⁹⁸ Parket van den Procureur-Generaal, no. 3217/A.P. Spoed-Geheim aan den Gouverneur-Generaal, October 27, 1936, in Mr. 1102x/1936.

⁶⁹⁹ Parket van den Procureur-Generaal, no. 3217/A.P. Spoed-Geheim aan den Gouverneur-Generaal, October 27, 1936, in Mr. 1102x/1936.

in Chinese newspapers from 1935 onward. Yet, as all *persbreidel* cases involving Chinese newspapers between 1936 and July 1937 showed, the evidence cited by the Bureau for East Asian Affairs would trace anti-Japanese articles and stance of a particular newspaper since the early 1930s.⁷⁰⁰

Second, anti-Japanese content was not the only factor to invoke *persbreidel* for Chinese newspapers; the authorities were also worried about the anti-Dutch and anti-Western implications of the commentary published in these newspapers, in particular among those Chinese papers published in the Malay language. The Chinese-Malay press circulated widely among Chinese and Indonesian readers, whereas those who could read Chinese characters were limited. In other words, the authorities needed to pay attention to the unpredictable influence of the Chinese-Malay press not only on Indies Chinese, but also on indigenous Indonesian readership. For this reason, anti-Dutch and anti-Western discourses were especially unacceptable.

Finally, the state of Sino-Japanese relations prevailing in the international context proved the determining factor of *persbreidel* against Chinese newspapers, as the Prosecutor General's letter on October 26, 1936, indicated. That is why the First Secretary of Government informed the Chinese Consul General about their decision on *persbreidel* against the Chinese press. In this context, the application of *persbreidel* became in part a diplomatic matter.

Also notable in the way that the story of *persbreidel* against Chinese newspapers unfolded is the fact that the Chinese Consul General was enjoined to take responsibility for not only the Chinese nationals residing in the colony, but also for the Indies Chinese in general. This situation seems odd because many Chinese residents had applied for the status of Dutch citizens, with many keeping "dual nationalities" of

⁷⁰⁰ Those cases consist of *Sin Po*, *Sumatra Bin Poh*, *New China*, *Thien Sung Yit Po*, and *Tay Kong Siang Po*.

both Dutch subjecthood and Chinese nationality. But as a matter of fact, China's Republican Government never conceded its jurisdiction over Indies Chinese, nor allowed them to lose their Chinese citizenship. The government appointed consuls to the Indies, and their duties were to protect the Chinese interests in commerce and schools there. In 1929 it passed a new Chinese citizenship act, which reaffirmed the principle of *jus sanguinis* that the Ch'ing government instituted in 1909. In 1930 it refused to agree to Article 4 of the Hague Convention on Citizenship, which prohibited any state from extending its diplomatic protection to one of its subjects living in any other jurisdiction with the status of its subject.⁷⁰¹ Therefore, technically, from China's point of view both the full-blooded (*totok*) and mix-blooded (*peranakan*) Chinese were subjects of its protection. This diplomatic argument supported the right of China's consuls to intervene in the Chinese press in the Indies. And it was this fact that put the Indies Chinese in a complicated position socially, politically, and legally, which was reflected in the case of the Chinese-Malay newspapers.

Sino-Japanese War

On July 7, 1937 the Marco Polo Bridge Incident marked the beginning of full-scale war between China and Japan, which is often referred to as the second Sino-Japanese War.⁷⁰² The front page of *Sin Tit Po*, a Surabaya-based Chinese-Malay newspaper, on July 29, 1937, carried the news of the war's development. The headline reads "*Pertempoeran-pertempoeran heibat: Kamenangan-kamenangan tentara Tionghoa di Langfiang, Fengial dan Tungchow*" (Intense Battles: Chinese

⁷⁰¹ Donald E. Willmott, *The National Status of the Chinese in Indonesia 1900-1958* (Ithaca: Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1961), pp. 16-17.

⁷⁰² For a Dutch spy's view on the war, see Ger Teitler and Kurt W. Radtke (eds.), *A Dutch Spy in China: Reports on the First Phase of the Sino-Japanese War* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1999).

Troops Victorious in Langfiang, Fengial and Tungchow).⁷⁰³ It provided a picture of Japan's aggressiveness in China and gave indication of its ambitious advance southward. Within two years, the shadow of Japan loomed large in the Netherlands Indies. The April 17, 1939 issue of *Sin Tit Po* blared this headline, "Netherlands Indies threatened by Japan!: American Marines on Watch in the Pacific. Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Ready to Strike?"⁷⁰⁴ Around this time, most residents in the Indies could feel the eventuality of war; that it was not confined to China, but was fast approaching. In fact, if the press was any indication, Japan had been a major security issue for the Indies government in the later half of the 1930s. The prevailing feeling was that even a little provocation could attract Japan's aggression to the Indies.

By the same token, the Sino-Japanese war also intensified the patriotic sentiments of the Chinese in the Indies. In its coverage of the war on July 29, 1937, *Sin Tit Po* used the phrase "*tentara Tionghoa*" (Chinese soldiers).⁷⁰⁵ In normal times, the more likely choice of phrasing would have been "*tentara Tiongkok*," which means the soldiers of China. There were two reasons for this peculiar word choice. The first had to do with a desire to appeal to the Chinese community in the Indies. *Sin Tit Po* opted for "*Tionghoa*," which encompasses all Chinese people, including those residing overseas. Obviously, the phrase choice was a move to appeal to the "national" sentiment of the Chinese in the Indies, with the implication being made that not only China but also Chinese people everywhere were at war with Japan. As a matter of fact, ever since Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931, Chinese newspapers in the Indies had diligently carried reports on Japan-related "incidents" in China⁷⁰⁶ and, not

⁷⁰³ "Perang Tiongkok-Japan: Pertempoeran-pertempoeran heibat: Kamenangan-kamenangan tentara Tionghoa di Langfiang, Fengial dan Tungchow," *Sin Tit Po*, 29 Juli 1937.

⁷⁰⁴ "Hindia Blanda teramtjem Djepang!: Marine Amerikaan mendjagah2 di Pacific. Berlin-Rome-Tokyo bersediah menghantem?" *Sin Tit Po*, April 17, 1939.

⁷⁰⁵ The term "Tionghoa" was Hokkien dialect, meaning the people of the center.

⁷⁰⁶ Between 1931 and 1937, China and Japan fought in small, localized engagements in so-called "incidents."

infrequently, anti-Japan(ese) opinions. As Amry Vandenbosch pointed out in the journal *Pacific Affairs* in 1930, the Chinese people in the Indies did have an active Chinese national sentiment.⁷⁰⁷

The second possible explanation for the use of the phrase “*tentara Tionghoa*” – that is “Chinese soldiers” rather than “soldiers of China” in *Sin Po*’s news coverage – derives from the fact that there was no unified Chinese military in China in the 1930s. Internal power struggle between the Nationalist and Communist parties had continued since the late 1920s and local warlords had enjoyed extraordinary power. Japan took advantage of this situation and made alliance with local powers in the course of its invasion.

As the crisis in China grew, the widespread sentiment of anti-Japan among the Chinese population in the Indies predictably alarmed and displeased the Indies government, which did not want its Chinese subjects to provoke Japan’s aggression. Chinese newspapers had played an important role in the political landscape of the Indies for a long time, and were increasingly becoming a medium for anti-Japan campaigns. In particular, after 1937 when the Japanese army invaded mainland China and the subsequent Sino-Japanese war broke out, scores of Chinese-owned newspapers explicitly promulgated anti-Japan sentiments. Unlike the British colonial government in Malay and Singapore, which supported Chinese-led anti-Japan campaigns, the Indies government suppressed them because it feared negative reactions from Japan. For this reason, as the Table 9-2 “*Persbreidel* Application and Warning of Chinese and Chinese-Malay periodicals from July 1, 1937” shows, in two years of time between 1938 and 1939, eleven Chinese and thirteen Chinese-Malay periodicals received either a warning or temporary *persbreidel* suspension.

⁷⁰⁷ Vandenbosch, “A Problem in Java,” p.1016.

With regard to the Table 9-2, the order of the place of publication is suggestive. Soerabaja was listed at the top, because it was the city where Japan's cultural propaganda was concentrated. Hence it is no surprise that the local Chinese press vigorously carried out anti-Japanese campaigns to counter Japan's propaganda. Other than Soerabaja, Batavia, Pontianak, Medan, and Makassar had Chinese consulates, and Chinese language newspapers in those cities also caught the attention of authorities.

Table 9-2: <i>Persbreidel</i> Application and Warning of Chinese and Chinese-Malay Periodicals from July 1, 1937 ⁷⁰⁸					
Chinese Press					
Place	Newspaper	Warning	1st Phase	2nd Phase	2nd Phase Reapplied
Soerabaja	<i>Tay Kong Siang Po</i>	38/4/1	38/7/9	38/9/17	38/5/9
	<i>Shang Pao</i>	38/4/2	38/5/9	April 39	
	<i>Ching Pao Weekly</i>	37/7/27			
	<i>Sie Nam Fung</i>	38/12/6			
Batavia	<i>Thien Sung Yit Po</i>	38/4/7	38/7/9		
	<i>Sin Po</i>	38/5/21	38/7/9	39/4/26	
	<i>Ta Chung Shih Chieh Weekly</i>	38/5/14	38/8/6	38/10/13	39/2/24
Pontianak	<i>Chiao Sheng Weekly</i>	38/5/9	38/7/9		
Medan	<i>Sumatra Bin Poh</i>	April 39			
	<i>New China</i>	38/5/7	37/7/15		
Makassar	<i>Hoa Chiao Yit Pao</i>	38/5/30	38/10/5	39/3/3	
Chinese-Malay Press					
Soerabaja	<i>Sin Tit Po</i>	37/12/13	38/4/5	38/7/9	
	<i>Sin Tit Po</i> (monthly)	April 38			
	<i>Pewarta Soerabaia</i>	38/5/7			
Batavia	<i>Sin Po</i>	38/10/27	39/3/25		
	<i>Keng Po</i>		38/7/28		
	<i>Tsa Hsioh Tsa Chih</i> (Dutch)	38/11/26			
	<i>Sin Po</i> (weekly)	38/9/5	38/11/28		
	<i>Panorama</i>	July 38			
	<i>Kung Yen</i>	38/11/28			
Bandoeng	<i>New Life Journal</i>	38/12/8			

⁷⁰⁸ Transcript. Letter. Buitenzorg, May 2, 1939, letter, HH. Extremely Urgent. The General Secretary (J. M. Kiveron).

Table 9-2 (Continued)					
Semarang	<i>Soeara Semarang</i>	Jan/Feb/38			
	<i>Matahari</i>	Aug 38			
Makassar	<i>Pemberita Makassar</i>	38/10/6			
Djogjakarta	<i>Soeara Mataram</i>	38/3/31			

Select Chinese newspapers were most important to the colonial authorities in their application of *persbreidel*. Twenty-four Chinese periodicals were among this group, and with a staff of twenty to focus on Chinese affairs at the Bureau for East Asian Affairs, keeping close watch on a group of this size was not overly demanding task. Particular Chinese journalists were under constant surveillance, too. During this period, both Chinese as well as indigenous journalists were sent to prison due to violations of *persdelict*. Suffice to say that the Indies government was quite concerned about the influence of Chinese newspapers and the activities of (Chinese) journalists in relation to Japan's advancement in Asia.

It appears, however, that the Indies government was less concerned about the Chinese newspapers or their nationalistic sentiment against Japanese than about the response that these provocations might elicit from the Japanese government. In fact, the Japanese consulates in Batavia and Surabaya repeatedly filed complaints with the Governor-General, calling attention to anti-Japanese articles that were published in Chinese newspapers. The Indies government generally responded by penalizing the reported Chinese newspapers. The majority of Chinese newspapers carrying out major anti-Japanese campaigns were in Batavia, Soerabaja and Medan, the cities where, coincidentally or not, Chinese consulates were stationed. Accordingly, most of the Chinese newspapers that were slapped with temporary suspension were located in these three cities. The Indies authorities also closely watched over the activities of the Chinese consulates, which they suspected to be hubs for Kuomintang's underground activities.

Due to the intensification of anti-Japanese campaigns by Chinese newspapers, the Indies authorities decided to invoke the second phase of *persbreidel* more often than in the past. In his letter to the Governor-General dated on October 20, 1938, the Prosecutor General recommended an urgent implementation of the second phase of *persbreidel*, and this recommendation was especially directed to newspapers in Chinese, Japanese, Chinese-Malay, and Malay languages,⁷⁰⁹ though it should be noted that Indonesian (Malay language) newspapers were not among the colonial government's primary security concerns at that point in time.

In November 1938 three important classified letters were circulated. First was a secret letter by the First Government Secretary, E. A. Zeilinga, addressed to the Prosecutor General as well as the directors of Bureau for East Asian Affairs and of Bureau for Native Affairs, which supported the Prosecutor General's view to pursue the application of the second phase of *persbreidel* more aggressively than ever before.⁷¹⁰ Second was a confidential letter from the Prosecutor General himself regarding the system for the circulation of secret documents. The letter suggested that the system had been simplified, making it possible for Assistant Regents to give policy recommendations directly to the Governor-General, so that the government could make decision on *persbreidel* in a more efficient way.⁷¹¹ As a result, in the period of seventeen months from December 1938 to April 1940,⁷¹² the second phase of

⁷⁰⁹ Parket van de Procureur-Generaal, 20 October 1938, no. 3122/A.P. Geheim. Mr. 1030x/38.

⁷¹⁰ De wd le Gouvernements Secretaris (E. A. Zeilinga) aan den Procureur-Generaal, November 3, 1938, no. 283/A Geheim, in Mr. 1030x/1938.

⁷¹¹ Parket van de Procureur-Generaal, 22 November 1938, no. 3515/A.P. Geheim. Mr. 1112x/38.

⁷¹² This time frame seems to overlap with the development of war in Europe. In March 1938, Germany annexed Austria, while Hitler began pressing his claims on the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia. In the same month, Germany invaded the remainder of Czechoslovakia and put it into the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and the pro-German client state, the Slovak Republic. In August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression treaty, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. In September 1939, Germany attacked Poland, and the so-called World War II began. In April 1940, Germany invaded Denmark and Norway, and in May advanced to France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. On May 13, 1940, the day before the Luftwaffe bombings in Rotterdam, Queen Wilhelmina, with Crown Princess Juliana and key government officials, boarded the British destroyer *Hereward* and sailed for England. Margaret E. Wagner, David M. Kennedy, Linda Barrett Osborne,

persbreidel was issued fourteen times, twelve out of which were against Chinese-owned newspapers.

A third letter was delivered by the Director of Economic Affairs, H. J. van Mook, dated on November 22. This recommendation was about the Pan-Asian media propaganda being conducted by the Japanese. According to Van Mook, Japan developed its propaganda in various Indonesian newspapers. In order to counter its activities, he recommended the applications of the Business Regulation Ordinance of 1934 and the Printing Houses Regulation Ordinance of 1935.⁷¹³ These urgent confidential letters suggest how desperate the Dutch authorities were in the middle of massive Japanese expansionist activities and domestic Chinese reactions.

The practice of *persbreidel* thus reflected the security concerns of the Indies state, which were formulated according to what the government considered the dominant threats against the state at the given time. In the late 1930s the Indies government shifted its security concern from internal to external issues; from the threat of the Indonesian nationalist movement to the imagined Japan's presence in the Indies and the likelihood of its aggression. One can say that *persbreidel* took shape because of the atmosphere of insecurity in the Indies. We shall look at how the Indies government conceived threats and how local journalists, especially Chinese, responded to the government's measures.

Liem Koen Hian and the Chinese Political Position

Towards the end of the 1930s conflicting evaluations existed about the Soerabaja-base Chinese-Malay daily, *Sin Tit Po*. A semi-official Japanese

Susan Reybur (eds.), *The Library of Congress World War II Companion* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), p. 77-78.

⁷¹³ De Directeur van Economische Zaken (H. J. van Mook), No. M 120/N.P. Zeer Geheim, November 22, 1938 aan den Gouverneur Generaal, in Mr. 1120x/1938.

government intelligence publication on the Indies Chinese categorized this newspaper as moderate and hence did not provide the same level of detailed information about the latter that it did for other anti-Japanese or pro-Japanese Chinese-Malay newspapers.⁷¹⁴ This suggests that the Japanese did not take the newspaper seriously. However, the Dutch authorities held a completely different view on the daily. As the chart “Persbreidel Application and Warning of Chinese and Chinese-Malay periodicals from July 1, 1937” demonstrates, *Sin Tit Po* not only received a warning on December 13, 1937, but was also temporarily shut down for the first phase of *persbreidel* on April 5, 1938, and three months later on July 9 was penalized with the second phase. *Sin Tit Po*’s *persbreidel* record stands out because no other Chinese-Malay newspapers were given the second phase of *persbreidel*, suggesting that the newspaper was targeted for particularly aggressive scrutiny by the authorities.

The peculiar circumstances of *Sin Tit Po*’s case are notable. A revealing contrast is provided by the case of other Chinese-Malay newspapers such as *Sin Po* and *Keng Po* (Batavia), and *Pewart Soerabaja* (Soerabaja), which were stamped as “anti-Japanese” by the Japanese intelligence. These newspapers were also on the watch list for potential *persbreidel* action after July 1937. That is, both Japan and Dutch authorities shared the same view of all three dailies. As the one newspaper that was subject to some of the colonial government’s harshest actions, however, *Sin Tit Po*, was clearly perceived differently and this had to do with the newspaper’s character and history. In the Indies, it was customary that chief-editors shaped the direction and opinions of the newspapers. From the outset the pro-(independent) Indonesia Liem Koen Hian took charge of *Sin Tit Po*. At the time the Prosecutor General considered applying *persbreidel* against the newspaper, Liem Koen Hian was, however no longer

⁷¹⁴ Mantetsu Toua Keizai Chosakyoku, *Ranryo Indo Niokeru Kakyo*, pp. 332-339.

the chief editor, but only a regular contributor from Batavia. Still, the Prosecutor General remained obsessed with Liem Koen Hian and his connection to *Sin Tit Po*.

The timing of the Prosecutor General's consideration of *persbreidel* against *Sin Tit Po* was peculiar as well, too. In March 1938, more than a half-year before the Dutch authorities expedited the procedure for *persbreidel*, *Sin Tit Po* drew particular attention from the Prosecutor General and the Head of Bureau for East Asian Affairs. In his letter dated on March 7, 1938, the Head of Bureau for East Asian Affairs, Lovink, requested Prosecutor General Marcella to take immediate action – meaning the first phase of *persbreidel* – against *Sin Tit Po*.⁷¹⁵ In citing his reasons for the request, Lovink explicitly referred to anti-Japanese articles written by Liem Koen Hian.

Marcella's accusation against Liem Koen Hian deserves examination, partly because Liem was by that time only a regular contributor and no longer the chief editor of *Sin Tit Po* and partly because Liem's articles revealed how he assailed and ridiculed Japan in his capacity as a journalist. As with other cases of *persbreidel* against the Chinese press, what irritated Lovink was not only Liem's articles, but also Japan's reaction to them. In January 27, 1938, Lovink had expressed concerns over Liem Koen Hian's criticism of Japan. Likely playing a factor in Lovink's growing irritation were the critical views on Liem's piece expressed in a Batavia-based Japanese newspaper, *Tohindo Nippo* on December 23 and 24, 1937. As early as on November 30, 1937, the Prosecutor General had assigned the Resident of Soerabaja the task of warning the editorial board of *Sin Tit Po* that because of its articles the paper was running serious risk of prosecution and *persbreidel* action. This decision was based on the Prosecutor General's observation of Liem's articles, which in

⁷¹⁵ De Adviseur, Hoofd van den Dienst der Oost-Aziatische Zaken (Lovink) aan den Procureur-Generaal, March 7, 1938, no. 1322/38 Geheim, in V 24-5-38-F17.

Marcella's view expressed contempt for Japan and aimed at stirring the feeling of hostility against Japanese.

According to Marcella, in a series of articles that appeared on October 25, 26, 27 and 28, 1937 under the title "*Kebangoesaan [Kebangsaan] di Djepang*,"⁷¹⁶ Liem Koen Hian had revealed a list of corruption scandals in the Japanese government, among local officials at regional governments, and in the Japanese trade and banking industries. In those articles Marcella saw a systematic pattern of expressing enmity and hatred against Japan. He also maintained that Liem's articles were shaped by an inferiority complex that Liem Koen Hian felt in connection with Japan and the Japanese. Marcella understood that such expressions in the press were officially subjected to Article 156 of the Penal Code, which concerned *persdelict*. Two weeks later, on December 13, 1937, Marcella ordered the Resident to give a severe warning to the newspaper as it had continued to publish offensive articles written by Liem Koen Hian. After this warning, it appeared that *Sin Tit Po* toned down its rhetoric. The chief editor of the newspaper, Liem Sam Thiang, told the Resident of Soerabaja that he had no intention to create problem between the Chinese and Japanese people in the Indies. He defended Liem Koen Hiam by saying that the latter had written articles based on numerous quotes from other people's writings. Liem Sam Thiang reportedly concluded that since he had received a severe warning from the Resident, he would no longer publish such controversial articles. The Prosecutor General observed that this was a positive change, and hence would not pursue further administrative measure against *Sin Tit Po*, as Marcella mentioned in his confidential letter of January 27, 1938.⁷¹⁷

⁷¹⁶ There is no such word as "*kebangoesaan*." It should be "*kebangsaan*" (nation).

⁷¹⁷ De Adviseur, Hoofd van den Dienst der Oost-Aziatische Zaken (Lovink) aan den Procureur-Generaal, March 7, 1938, no. 1322/38 Geheim, in V 24-5-38-F17.

Despite the warnings Liem Koen Hian did not stop contributing anti-Japanese articles to *Sin Tit Po* in the course of February and March of 1938, and editor Liem Sam Thiang continued to publish these, which led the Prosecutor General to rethink his decision about Liem and the newspaper. Marcella sent an urgent confidential letter to the Governor-General dated on March 23, 1938, under the title “Proposal to apply the first phase of *persbreidel* to the Surabaya-based Chinese-Malay newspaper *Sin Tit Po*.”⁷¹⁸ In it, Marcella made it clear that Liem Koen Hian, a former chief editor of *Sin Tit Po*, had been writing anti-Japanese articles for the newspaper for many years now. The letter determined that for some time now the major part of the newspaper was dedicated to fierce anti-Japanese articles and the responsibility for most of these lay with Liem Koen Hian. The list of anti-Japanese articles cited by Marcella included the following: “*Djepang Minta Minta-ampoen*” (“Japan Begging for Mercy”) in the December 17, 1937 issue; “*Keadaan moelai terbalik boeat Djepang*” (“The tide has turned against Japan”) on January 22, 1938; “*Djepang obral abab Minister*” (“Japan’s inept ministers on sale”) on January 26; “*Djepang tentoe tamat tjeriteranja*” (“Japan’s story will surely end”) on January 28; “*Kebiadaban binatang Djepang*” (“Japan’s bestiality”) on February 14; “*Tjoema ada doea bangsa*” (“Only two kinds of people exist”) on February 15; “*Treurig*” (“Sad”) on February 22; “*Ke Tokio*” (“To Tokyo”) on February 24; and “*Perlawanan Tiongkok boeat perdamaian doenia, pri-pri-keadilan than kesopanan*” (“China fighting for world peace, justice and civilization”) on March 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9. Some of the cited articles did not directly attack, but rather poked fun at Japan or Japanese. For instance, in the article “*Djepang obral abab Minister*,” Liem referred to the Japanese Prime Minister Suetsugu as a senile old man who was half cooked. Still, noting the anti-Japanese rhetoric in this writing, the

⁷¹⁸ Den Procureur-Generaal (Marcella) aan den Gouverneur-Generaal, no. 832/A.P. Spoed Geheim, March 23, 1938 in V 24-5-38-F17.

Prosecutor General decided to apply the second phase of *persbreidel* to *Sin Tit Po* in March 1938.

It is obvious that the Dutch authorities paid special attention to articles by Liem Koen Hian and an important factor in this high level of scrutiny applied to Liem's writings appears to have been the debate that Liem had with Soetomo back in 1936.⁷¹⁹ Soetomo had just concluded a study tour to Japan in June 1936 and contributed his travel accounts to *Soeara Oemoem*. This was his second trip to Japan and he advocated a closer relationship between Indonesia and Japan for the benefit of Indonesians. Because of this, Liem chided Soetomo as a "propagandist of Japanese imperialism," noting that the latter had failed to identify Japan as an imperialistic nation.

Soetomo dismissed Liem's criticism, according to scholar Leo Suryadinata, arguing that Liem did not like Japan simply because Japan was penetrating into China, Liem's ancestral land. But this claim did not really correspond with Liem Koen Hian's character. By the middle of 1930s, Liem had been established as an advocate of Indonesian nationalism. Soetomo knew this quite well because he had written several articles in support of the PTI, which Liem established in 1932. In fact, they were friends, and there appeared to be no hard feelings between them despite of the debate. When Soetomo passed away in May 1938, Liem Koen Hian and other PTI leaders attended his funeral service to pay their last respect.

Looking back at the footsteps taken in life by Liem Koen Hian helps to understand his politics. Liem was known as an outspoken journalist from early on in his career. He was born in 1896 in Bandjarmasin, East Borneo. His father, Liem Ke

⁷¹⁹ The following account is based on Suryadinata's analysis of the debate, Leo Suryadinata, "Pre-War Indonesian Nationalism and the Peranakan Chinese," *Indonesia*, No. 11 (1971), pp. 83-94.

An, was a well-to-do Chinese businessman.⁷²⁰ He attended a Dutch primary school in Bandjarmasin and later studied law in Batavia. When he was in Bandjarmasin, he started working as a staff writer for the weekly *Penimbangan* (Deliberation) and after 1914 for a magazine in Soerabaja, *Tjhoen Tjhioe*. The latter journal was run by Kwee Hing Tjiat and changed its name from *Bok Tok* in 1914. Liem was also a correspondent for *De Locomotief* (Semarang), and contributed some articles in *Soerabaiashce Handelsblad* (Soerabaja); both were Dutch language newspapers. In 1917 at the age of 21, he published a short-lived weekly of his own, *Soo Lim Poo* in Soerabaja.

After more than a year doing business in Aceh, from December 1918 to 1921 Liem moved to Padang to take up a position as the editor-in-chief at *Sinar Sumatra*. This newspaper was an advocate of Chinese nationalism in Sumatra, the way *Sin Po* was in Java. When it came to the issue of nationality, Liem was always opposed to the Dutch nationality law, which encouraged Indies Chinese to obtain Dutch nationality or remain Dutch subjects. That was one of the ways by which the Dutch government tamed the Chinese grievances regarding their social status in the Indies. To provide counterargument, in his article “*Oendang-Oendang Kerakjatan Olanda*” (“Dutch Nationality Law”) published on February 5, 1919, in *Sinar Sumatra*, Liem explicitly remarked:

I am a Chinese, I have a fatherland across the sea which is trying to improve itself. In this endeavor it urges its faithful sons, either those in the country or overseas, to help and make contribution. Among these sons overseas are my people in the Indies who, in turn, look to their fatherland to enhance their

⁷²⁰ Liem Koen Hian's career mainly relies on Tjamboek Berdoeri, *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara* (Malang, ELKASA, 2004); Leo Suryadinata, “Liem Koen Hian: A Peranakan Who Searched for Political Identity” in his *Peranakan's Search for National Identity*, pp. 56-84.

status. It is the duty of the Indies Chinese that, before we help other countries, we should help China because we place all our hope in China. It is understandable that the improvement of our status overseas will come rather slowly, but we will not lose our patience.⁷²¹

Liem's article made two points. One was about the creation of the modern China state. He acknowledged that he resided in the Indies and as an overseas Chinese he felt the obligation to support China. This argument led to Liem's second point, which was the status of Indies Chinese. Liem understood that the inferior social and political status of Indies Chinese derived from the fact that China was not as developed as Japan. Because Japan was recognized as a modern state like Western countries, its citizens were granted equal legal status as the Westerners in the Indies. Therefore, a strong modern China would, in Liem's view, uplift the Chinese status in the Indies. This was a common understanding among Chinese nationalists, and had persuaded many overseas Chinese to support Chinese nationalism since the turn of the century. It appears that Liem also subscribed to the theory.

Liem however never believed in the idea that Indies Chinese should or would ultimately go back to China. In fact, he sounded certain that Indies Chinese would continue to live in the Indies. Thus, for Liem, supporting China did not mean abandoning the Indies. Rather, it implied providing financial and moral support for China while building one's life and future in the Indies. Accordingly, Liem had argued for an improved status for the Chinese in the colony. The main point of his writing, then, dealt not with the question of whether or not Indies Chinese should keep

⁷²¹ Liem Koen Hian, "Oendang-Oendang Kerakjatan Olanda," *Sinar Sumatra*, February 5, 1919, cited and translated by Suryadinata, in his *Peranakan's Search for National Identity*, p. 60.

their Chinese nationality, but with their demands for a better political, social, and economic position under the current situation.⁷²²

This last point brings up the question of Liem's readership. Liem's articles addressed not only the readers of *Sinar Sumatra*, but also the colonial authorities, because he was aware that the newspaper was under surveillance by the Bureau for Chinese Affairs. When he used the word "we," Liem addressed his Indies Chinese readers. But while doing this, he also talked to the authorities, that "we" the Chinese people in the Indies demanded equal status and better treatment in the Dutch colony. He understood the fact that in order for the Chinese to uplift their status, they had to negotiate with the colonial government. He was conscious of how political circumstances determined the destiny of "his" people.

Liem held this realistic view of the Chinese's position in the Indies consistently throughout his life. Up until the middle of the 1920s, no one could imagine that the Indies state would come to an end in one's lifetime. But in the middle of the 1920s the political discourse of Indonesian nationalism shifted from the creation of a new society based on ideology such as Islamism and Communism, to attaining political sovereignty from the Dutch. In this changing political context, Liem understood early on that the Chinese needed to resolve their status in the Indies, or the potentially sovereign Indonesia. That is, in anticipation of the fact that Indonesian would gain their political sovereignty, the Chinese needed to speak to Indonesian political leaders, not to the Dutch authorities, to secure the betterment of their position and their future.

A turning point for Liem came in 1921 when he moved to Soerabaja and became an editor for *Pewarta Soerabaia*, a weekly owned by The Kian Seng. The

⁷²² On peranakan politics in colonial Java, see Leo Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java, 1917-1942* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981).

Kian Seng was another prominent Chinese nationalist and journalist, who had been critical of the Dutch citizenship policy. In March 1925 Liem resigned from *Pewartar Soerabaia*, and two months later, in May 1925, he obtained the position of chief editor of *Soeara Poeblik* in Soerabaja, which he kept until 1929. In 1929 before *Sin Jit Po* went bankrupt, he became its editor-in-chief, and subsequently for *Sin Jit Po*'s reincarnation, *Sin Tit Po*. In Soerabaja he collaborated with moderate Indonesian nationalists, such as leaders of the Association of Indonesian Nation (PBI) headed by Soetomo.

His view of the political and social position as Indies Chinese was clear. He wrote an article "*Soeal peranakan*" ("About the Indies Chinese") in the June 17, 1930 issue of *Sin Tit Po*, saying that:

As we have often said, this export of Indies Chinese to China is an impossible thing, because they have been destined by nature to live and make their livelihood here, not in China. [...]

Most people cannot work with the same aptitude in different types of climate and soil. Except for the Chinese, because thus far Chinese people seem to be able to work hard, no matter if their present country has a colder or hotter climate compared to in their land of origin. This habit of hardwork in all types of climate, combined with frugality, has made Chinese people an invincible labor force everywhere. [...]

Because the issue concerning Indies Chinese is first and foremost the matter of provisions in order to survive and pursue life's goals, and because Indies Chinese cannot live in other countries, especially not in China, the Chinese people here should *not* neglect their position in this country but must attempt every effort to make this position the best they can, by first getting rid of the

mindset that is indifferent to affairs of this country. Because in the end these things are also the Chinese problems.⁷²³

Liem's realistic understanding of the Chinese position in the Indies led him to establish the PTI in 1932. He was elected as chairperson and *Sin Tit Po* became its official news organ. PTI had among its supporting bases the Chinese labors in Soerabaja, in contrast to the Sin Po group whose circle consisted mainly of Batavian Chinese, or to the pro-Dutch Chinese association CHH, which was based in Semarang among Dutch-educated, rich Chinese entrepreneurs.⁷²⁴

⁷²³ "Persoalan peranakan," *Sin Tit Po*, June 17, 1930.

Kita soedah sering oedjoenken, ini export baba ke Tiongkoka ada satoe perkara jang tida aken bisa kedjadian, sebab baba soeda ditakdirken oleh alam aken hidoep dan tjari makannja di sini, boekan di Tiongkok. [...]

Kebanjakan bangsa tida bisa bekerja sama koeatnja dalem segala matjem hawa oedara dan boemi. Tjoema bangsa Tionghoa roepanja ada terketjoeali, sebab sampe sabegini djaoeh bangsa Tionghoa kliatannja sanggoep bekerdja berat, tida perdoeli di negeri jang hawanja lebih dingin atawa lebih panas dari negeri asalnja. Ini kebiasa'an bekerdja keras dalem segala matjem hawa oedara, ditambah sama kebisa'an hidoep saderhana sekali, bikin bangsa Tionghoa sebagi kaoem boeroeh djadi sanget ditakoeti di segala negeri. [...]

Sebab soeal peranakan pertama ada soeal peroet aken bisa hidoep boeat beroe toedjoean-toedjoeannja manoesia hidoep, dan sebab peranakan tida bisa hidoep di negeri laen, teroetama tida di Tiongkok, maka peranakan *tida* boleh loepaken kedoedoekannja dalem ini negeri dan moesti berdaja sebisnja boeat bikin itoe kedoedoekan djadi sebrapa bisa baik, dengen lempar lebih doeloe sikepnja jang tida perdjoelian pada oeroesan-oeroesan dari ini negeri. Jang toch mendjadi sebagian djoega dari marika poenja oeroesan sendiri.

⁷²⁴ Liem Koen Hian, "Three Political Streams in the Peranakan Chinese Community," *Sin Tit Po*, August 25-26, 1932, translated and complied by Leo Suryadinata in Suryadinata, *Political Thinking of the Indonesian Chinese 1900-1995*, pp. 51-55.

Three political streams can be divided in two different ways; the criteria are educational background of the members and class differences between their supporters.

The main supporting organization of daily *Sin Po* was the *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* (the Chinese Association, THHK), whereas PTI members, like those of CHH, usually had Dutch education. Thus roughly speaking, due to their language (education) differences, the way in which Indies Chinese perceived their political situations also varied. The Sin Po group was closer to totok Chinese, whereas the PTI and CHH Chinese were Western-minded. Yet this cultural difference did not cause major conflicts or hostile rivalry among them.

The second factor is perhaps more crucial, that is class/ideological difference. CHH was based in Semarang where an old peranakan community was long established and served as center for *peranakan* big business, such as the Oei Tiong Ham Concern, one of the biggest conglomerates in colonial Southeast Asia. It was in a sense a rightwing *peranakan* party. CHH's leaders like Kan Hok Hoei (H. H. Kan) and Tan Tjiang Ling were usually criticized as being pro-Dutch. The association itself was often condemned in the *peranakan* newspapers as neglecting the Chinese poor. To the contrary, PTI was "known as the party of the less wealthy strata of peranakan society" (Mona Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia 1837-1942*. Jakarta: Djambatan, 1996, p. 164). In fact, PTI constituted of

In early 1933 Liem quit *Sin Tit Po* due to a quarrel with the director. Staying in Soerabaja, he then joined Kwee Hing Tjiat at the daily *Mata Hari* of Semarang, which was subsidized by Oei Tiong Ham Concern and was known to maintain a close link with the CHH. Liem subsequently moved to Batavia to study at the law school (*Recht Hogeschool*). There he directed *Timboel* magazine with Sanoesi Pane, a prominent indigenous Indonesian literati. He also assisted *Siang Po*, a newspaper owned by Phoa Liong Gie, a lawyer who left CHH in 1934. In Batavia he became associated with radical and active indigenous nationalists such as Mohamad Yamin, Sanoesi Pane, and Amir Sjariffoedin. These nationalists published a newspaper, *Kebangoenan* (Awakening), which was printed by the Siang Po Printing Press and shared news items and articles with *Siang Po*. In 1936 Liem became the chief editor of *Panorama* magazine, whose editorial board included A. Subardjo, Amir Sjarifoeddin, Mohamad Yamin, Phoa Liong Gie, and Sanoesi Pane. However circumstantial, Liem's journalistic experience in Padang helped him get closer to Amir Sjariffoedin, Mohamad Yamin and Sanoesi Pane, who spent their younger days in the city. While he stayed in Batavia, he regularly contributed articles to *Sin Tit Po*.

In April 1937 Liem left *Siang Po* and became the editor-in-chief of *Kong Hoa Po*, which was also published by the Siang Po Printing Press. In November 1938 he left *Kong Hoa Po* at the invitation of Dr. Tjoa Sik Ien, the new president of the PTI Soerabaja branch and the proprietor of *Sin Tit Po*. In January 1939 he returned to

a small minority of *peranakan* (despite its electoral success in Soerabaja), relatively leftwing professionals and journalists. It sought for a political assimilation of the Chinese with the indigenous society. The members' political orientation was generally anti-colonial and supported the Indonesian nationalist movement. Even the party's pro-China stand was essentially based on anti-Japanese imperialism. In this sense, PTI's political stand differed from *Sin Po*'s pro-China stand which emphasized rather on affinity for the motherland. Therefore, while *Sin Po* often invited its readers to assist China in times of trouble, *Sin Tit Po* paid more attention to changing political situations in China and to anti-Japanese movements in and outside of China.

This analysis is drawn from my article, "The Chinese Connection." The rivalry between PTI and CHH, see also Arief W. Djati dan Ben Anderson (eds.), *Menjadi Tjamboek Berdoeri: Memoar Kwee Thiam Tjing* (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2010), pp. 103-122. Kwee Thiam Tjing described CHH as the enemy of PTI (*musuh politiek*). Djati and Anderson, *Menjadi Tjamboek Berdoeri*, p. 112.

serve as editor-in-chief for *Sin Tit Po*, but soon relinquished that position to Tan Ling Djie in order to continue his study of law in Batavia.

Liem Koen Hien's personal networks present several intriguing points. First, he worked with journalists of various political orientations. Such Chinese journalists as The Kian Seng, Hauw Tek Kong, and Phoa Liong Gie did not share Liem's political beliefs and were affiliated with different organizations. Yet, within their network Chinese journalists appeared to both compete with each other over and share their positions as editors.⁷²⁵ For example, Oei Kie Hok retired from his editorial position at *Sin Jit Po*, and Tan Kien Lian (former editor of *Sin Bin*, Bandoeng) and Lie Sin Thian (former chief editor of *Tjhoen Tjhioe* and *Palita*, Soerabaja) replaced him.⁷²⁶ In another instance, Liem Djit Seng and Oei Kie Hok (who left *Sin Jit Po*) took up the position of editor at *Warna Warta* (Semarang). In this manner, prominent journalists traveled through major newspapers and cities in the Indies, as Liem's journalistic career clearly shows. Such mutation of editors worked because the journalist network operated on a regular basis, and the operation of the press depended on such networking.

Second, Liem also made connections with indigenous journalists and nationalist leaders, such as Soetomo, Sanoesi Pane, Amir Sjarifoeddin, Mohamad Yamin, and A. Subardjo. It was not unusual for Chinese journalists to network with indigenous journalists. Indeed, the Association of Journalists of Asia facilitated such connections. For instance, Kwee Hing Tjiat had connections with Parada Harahap, Saëroen, and Bakri Suraatmadja, while Kwee Kek Beng as director of *Sin Po* employed W. R. Soepratman and D. Koesoemaningrat. These personal networks intertwined and provided the basis for a journalist community in the Indies. In the

⁷²⁵ I find it a kind of mutation among Chinese journalists, although they often had controversies and quarrels. Yamamoto, "The Chinese Connection"; Djati and Anderson, *Menjadi Tjamboek Berdoeri*, pp. 61-69.

⁷²⁶ *Sin Jit Po*, May 28, 1926, (Th. 3, No. 114), L1-2.

case of Liem Koen Hian, he did not confine himself to a purely journalistic circle, but through his network with Indonesian intellectuals joined Gerindo (Indonesian People's Movement), which was established in May 1937 by his friends, A. K. Gani, Sartono, Amir Sjarifoeddin, Sanoesi Pané, and Mohamad Yamin. Those founding members of Gerindo were known as leftwing nationalists who aspired to socialist ideals for the future of Indonesia. In fact, Gerindo was the first Indonesian political party that opened the door to *peranakan* Chinese in the 1930s. Gerindo had two missions for its movement. The first was to raise the public's consciousness of nationalist ideas by organizing people. The second was to seek a cooperative approach with the Dutch authorities. This stance stemmed from the developing international affairs when fighting against fascism in Europe as well as in Asia became a major issue.

The fact that Liem joined Gerindo confirmed his lifelong anti-imperialist political position.⁷²⁷ It was this aspect of Liem's life and work that was the main reason why the Dutch authorities were especially intent on suppressing his writing through their actions against *Sin Tit Po*, singling out his articles from among other anti-Japanese publications for a particularly strict level of scrutiny and punishment. Other Chinese newspapers were essentially nationalistic and carried anti-Japanese articles because China was under attack. By contrast, Liem Koen Hian assailed Japan

⁷²⁷ His other political orientation was anti-authority. He had been critical against Dutch-appointed Chinese officials, and often criticized or made fun of them. "Persdelict Liem Koen Hian: Satoe peladjaran dalem journalistiek," *Sin Tit Po*, March 17, 1936. Liem was arrested when Japanese occupation began in 1942, but was soon released. Then he was appointed assistant to Toyoshima, head of the Chinese Section at the Japanese Consulate in Batavia. Suryadinata, *Peranakan's Search for National Identity*, p. 73. On April 29, 1945 when the Investigative Committee for the Preparation of Indonesia's Independence (*Badan Penyelidik Usaha-Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia*, BPUPKI) was established, he was appointed to be a member of it. Kusuma, *Lahirnya Undang-undang Dasar 1945*, pp. 8, 534. In 1950 Liem reestablished a multiracial political party, the Union of Indonesian Forces (*Persatuan Tenaga Indonesia*). In the middle of August 1951 Liem was detained for his leftist activities by the Sukiman cabinet that arrested approximately 15,000 left-wing activists until the end of October. Liem was released on October 29, 1951, but was quite ill. On November 5, 1952, he passed away in Medan as a Chinese citizen. Suryadinata, *Peranakan's Search for National Identity*, pp. 78-79. For anti-Communist raid of August 1951, see Herbert Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), pp. 187-192.

because he regarded Japan as imperialistic. *Tohindo Nippo* perceived this difference, and in the Japanese eyes Liem Koen Hian's anti-imperialistic argument after he left *Sin Tit Po* became far more dangerous than the nationalistic ones by other Chinese press. Moreover, *Sin Tit Po* circulated mainly in Soerabaja where Japanese cultural propaganda was active and they must have been aware of the influence of his articles in local Chinese circles as well as in the Indonesian community. Therefore the Japanese news organ took exception to *Sin Tit Po*'s articles, and the Prosecutor General of the Indies was forced to take care of the problem by shutting down the newspaper.

The Dutch authorities employed different strategies for containing Liem Koen Hian. In April 1939 he was accused of *persdelict* with a fellow Chinese journalist, Liem Sam Tjiang. Unlike *persbreidel*, in which a court trial that includes exchanges between journalists and the authorities is circumvented, high profile *persdelict* cases were often reported in the press. The *persdelict* charge against these two journalists was apparently some kind of public punishment. In its issues of April 4 and 8, 1939, *Keng Po*, a Batavia-based Chinese-Malay newspaper, published the transcript of the *persdelict* trial of the two Chinese journalists from *Sin Tit Po* by the *Landraad*. The Court tried Liem Koen Hian and Liem Sam Tjiang on charges of expressing enmity, hatred and insult against Japanese people (*bangsa Djepang*) in the Indies. It listed as evidence seven articles published in the period of two months, namely from January 26, 1938 to March 1, 1938.⁷²⁸ Five out of seven articles were the exact same articles, which the Prosecutor General had cited in his confidential report in April 1938. As a

⁷²⁸ Seven articles are as follows: "Djepang obral abab Minister" (January 26, 1938), "Djepang tentoe tamat tjeritanja" (January 28, 1938), "Tjoema ada doea bangsa" (February 15, 1938), "Terlalo ketjiwa en treurig" (February 22, 1938), "Gebiedende eisch" (Imperious demand) (February 23, 1938), "Ka Tokio" (February 24, 1938), and "Gelijke methoden" (Similar methods) (March 1, 1938).

matter of fact, Liem Koen Hian wrote all the articles, but Liem Sam Tjiang was also tried for publishing them.

The exchanges that took place between the Court chairman and the two defendants are quite intriguing. To begin, the chairman, Mr. Beukerman, asked what the defendants thought of the accusation, and both naturally denied the charges. Liem Sam Tjiang argued that the writings were about Japanese soldiers who were currently occupying China and had nothing to do with the Japanese people in the Indies. The chairman however insisted that the Japanese in the Indies could not be separated from those in China, as they surely would stand behind their government. In his response, instead of backing down, Liem Sam Tjiang proclaimed that God would not forgive the Japanese for their cruel acts in China.

When it was his turn to be questioned, Liem Koen Hian argued that he had an obligation as a journalist to counter the influence of Japanese propaganda, which was good for only Japan and bad for the Indies. In the article “*Tjoema ada doea bangsa*” (“Only two kinds of people exist”), he argued that there were two types of nations, “civilized” and “barbaric” (*bangsa-bangsa biadab dan bangsa-bangsa jang sopan*), and went on to call Japanese soldiers barbaric for their brutality in China (*soldadoe-soldadoe Djepang jang berlakoe begitoe boeas di Tiongkok*). The chairman pointed out that, reading Liem’s article, readers would make assumption that all Japanese people were barbaric and as such the article was offensive to Japanese. Liem simply denied that it was his intention. The chairman also pointed out another article in which Liem had remarked that Japan tried to fool other Asian nations (*Djepang tjoba menipoe bangsa-bangsa Asia jang lain*). Liem defended his writing by saying that Japan was not at all honest with its motto “Asia for Asians” (*Asia boeat orang Asia*), because its real intention was to dominate all Asian nations.⁷²⁹

⁷²⁹ “Persdelict ‘Sin Tit Po’,” *Sin Tit Po*, April 4 & 8, 1939.

As with Semaoen, the trial allowed Liem Koen Hian and Liem Sam Tjiang to further criticize the Japanese military action in China. In the 1910s and 1920s, Indonesian nationalists and journalists sometimes took advantage of *persdelict* trials to make their case against the authorities, as they were given the opportunity to present their defense in front of an audience in the court. Liem Koen Hian and Liem Sam Tjiang also took advantage of their trial to express critical views on Japanese and Dutch authorities. But this particular *persdelict* case was exceptional, because it came one year after *persbreidel* was applied to *Sin Tit Po*. Usually with the *persbreidel*, journalists were deprived of the chance to speak or argue against the authority. In this case, however, since the *persdelict* charge came a year after the *persbreidel*, the authorities inadvertently gave an opportunity for the two Chinese journalists to speak up not only for their defense, but also for that of *Sin Tit Po*'s.

It appears that the Dutch authorities came under increasing pressure from the Japanese to punish the two journalists. Under Japan's shadow, the colonial state was paralyzed by political discourses in Chinese-Malay newspapers. It had to penalize Liem Koen Hian, a prominent Chinese journalist, who joined Gerindo, which under the leadership of leftist Indonesian nationalists had pursued collaboration with the Indies state to fight against Japan's fascism. The vulnerable colonial government apparently began to lose its way in the time of war.

Conclusion

For the first three decades of the twentieth century, as Amry Vandenbosch and John Furnivall correctly described, the Chinese were not a threat to the Indies government at all. The politics of the Chinese community were not considered threatening, as they generally concerned their own group and were unrelated to other groups in the Indies. This was how the Indies government framed "*de Chineesche*

kwestie” (“the Chinese question”), that is as essentially a question concerning their legal and social status in the Indies, not their politics. In this view, the Chinese residents of the Indies were busy either seeking greater concessions from the government or quarreling among themselves. In this sense, in the eyes of the colonial authority, the Chinese were politically “invisible.”

But in late 1930s, the Chinese became “visible” in the context of international affairs when their activities became politically threatening to the colonial state, albeit indirectly. Cases of *persbreidel* illustrated how national security was perceived by the Indies government. In this regard, the Chinese press shaped the national security issue in the late 1930s. In many respects, both the colonial government and the Chinese in the Indies were spectators. They were the audience and consumers of news coverage of affairs that took place in distant China, in particular the conflict with Japan. The difference is that for the Chinese, the war became a moment that encouraged expressions of patriotism and anti-imperialism, whereas for the Indies government, such expressions of Chinese solidarity became a matter of state security. Ironically, it is this position of spectatorship that finally made the Chinese “visible” to the colonial state.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

“*SINGAPORE DJATOH*” (SINGAPORE HAS FALLEN), was the headline of *Sin Tit Po* on February 16, 1942. “It is officially announced: Singapore has surrendered” (*Dengen officieel dikabarken: Singapore telah menjerah*), the subtitle elaborated.⁷³⁰ From this news, taken from Reuters, residents in the Indies learned that the Japan had successfully taken over Singapore, a major hub of British imperialism, just northwest of Indonesia. The news shook the Indies, as the Netherlands had long relied on the British support for the defense of its colonial empire. The last shred of hope that war in Asia could be averted appeared to have vanished.

The Indies government found itself completely unprepared for the Japanese military invasion.⁷³¹ Just two months earlier, on December 19, 1941 or less than two weeks after the assault on Pearl Harbor,⁷³² the city of Pontianak in West Borneo had been seized by the Japanese military,⁷³³ and hence the Netherlands Indies was practically at war with Japan. In early January 1942, Minahasa in North Celebes and Tarakan in East Borneo, too, were under attack. Some Indonesians still held out hope

⁷³⁰ “SINGAPORE DJATOEH,” *Sin Tit Po*, February 16, 1942.

⁷³¹ Among Indonesian literati the coming war was a given fact. Adi Negoro even published a book entitled *Boekoe Perang Doenia Kedoea* (World War II Book) in August 1940. According to the advertisement, the book covered the development of war in Europe between September 1939 and June 1940. Advertisement of the book is listed in *Pewarta Deli*, August 24, 1940.

⁷³² In his memoir, Oey Tiang Tjoei, a journalist, recalled the day (December 8, 1941) he was arrested by the Dutch for his pro-Japanese activities as follows.

I remember very vividly, that since very early morning and on Monday 8 December 2601 [1941], it was raining all over Batavia. The air at that time was dark, as if bringing terrible signs for the Dutch people. It was as if nature had given notice to the Dutch government, that the end of the Dutch rule in Indonesia was only a matter of time.

Oey Tiang Tjoei, *Pengalaman kita dalam pengasingan Garoet-Soekaboemi dan Noesakambangan (Tjilatjap)* (Djakarta: Hong-Po, 1942), p. 1.

⁷³³ “Pontianak Diserang Moesoeh,” *Sin Tit Po*, December 20, 1941.

that American warplanes would come to their rescue,⁷³⁴ even after the raid on Soerabaja on February 2.⁷³⁵ But the Dutch colonial army was not trained for modern warfare, thus the Japanese military easily advanced from the Philippines to North Celebes, to Borneo, to South Celebes, and finally Java. From the initial attack, it took no more than two months to reach the heart of the Dutch colony.

In fact, since the Netherlands was occupied by the Nazi Germany in May 1940, the Indies had been trying to get ready for the upcoming war. The war situation pushed the Indies government to exercise an extreme form of censorship, including a control over any kind of information related to war.⁷³⁶ Channels of communication like the postal service, telegraph, and telephone were put under tight surveillance. Travelling in and out of the Indies was also closely controlled.⁷³⁷

The legal foundation for this government action was the censorship ordinance (*censuurordonnantie*) of 1932, stipulating official “supervision on the use of transport, postal, telegraph and telephone services to protect the external and internal security of Netherlands Indies” (*overheidstoezicht op het gebruik van vervoer-, post-, telegraaf- en telefoondiensten ter bescherming van de uit- en inwendige veiligheid van Nederlandsch-Indië*). It granted the government authority to exercise such censorship in instances when there was confirmed “risk of war or insurrection” (*gevaar voor oorlog of opstand*).⁷³⁸ The Netherlands and the Indies governments, and their policy makers had been discussing such an ordinance to supervise various means of communications since 1911, before the 1911 Chinese revolution and the World War I

⁷³⁴ “Pesawat2-pemboeroe U.S.A. sampe di Java?” *Sin Tit Po*, February 9, 1942.

⁷³⁵ “Soerabaja diserang pertama,” *Sin Tit Po*, February 3, 1942.

⁷³⁶ “Indonesia dalem geloembang perang: Censuur dan Publiciteit,” *Sin Tit Po*, July 22, 1940. The title is suggestive, because it reads, “Indonesia in the waves of war.” The article describes the government is tight censorship concerning war.

⁷³⁷ Mr. 128x/1933.

⁷³⁸ Mr. 371x/1924. In the proposal for the ordinance in 1932, the phrase “to protect the external and internal security of the Netherlands Indies” was added. Mr. 128x/1933.

took place. In fact, the Netherlands, which played only a minor role in international affairs, employed a neutralist policy towards the Boxer Rebellion in China at the turn of the twentieth century as well as in the World War I.⁷³⁹ Originally the ordinance was intended to monitor internal postal, telegraph, and telephone communication, so whenever a “warning” (*waarschuwing*) sign was detected, the authorities could exercise a tighter control. During the World War I when the Netherlands kept its neutrality, the word “warning” was replaced with “the risk of war or insurrection” (*gevaar voor oorlog of opstand*).

This censorship ordinance underscored the Netherlands’ vulnerable position in world politics. Geopolitically it was a small power in Europe, while its commercial activities with its colonies were made possible under the protective arm of Britain. But since the late nineteenth century, rapid changing international circumstances pushed the Netherlands to change its policies towards its colony in Asia. In the 1870s, under international pressure, it was forced to open up the Indies to international trade, essentially integrating its market with the world capitalist economy. In the mean time, in Asia, Japan was emerging as a considerable power – being recognized by Sino-Japanese war in 1894-95, the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902 and defeating Russia in 1905; in Europe, the growing hostility between Britain and Germany had made the Netherlands uneasy, especially with Germany’s naval development, which naturally posed a threat to the Netherlands. As these changes necessitated more independent security policy and actions in order to maintain the law and order in the Indies, the censorship ordinance was discussed. It had been “in the making” for all those years,⁷⁴⁰ long before its formal installation in 1932.

⁷³⁹ Amry Vandenbosch, *The Neutrality of the Netherlands During the World War* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1927).

⁷⁴⁰ In the early 1920s, the issue of censorship ordinance was discussed even in the quasi-parliament, Volksraad (People’s Council). Mr. 371x/1924. But the 1932 version had been examined within a limited circle of Dutch policy makers in the Netherlands and high-ranking colonial bureaucrats, such as

But as this dissertation has shown, in practice since the early twentieth century other forms of censorship had been tried and applied on many occasions, in particular where the Indies government confronted the nationalist movement as well as radical and transnational political activism by its residents since the 1910s. Before the Dutch policy makers discussed the censorship ordinance, they had started deliberating on other ways to regulate the press – whether or not to introduce administrative measure, or whether the existing Penal Code was adequate. As it turned out, political circumstances were the primary determinant in both the policy process and outcome of censorship.

The two major types of press censorship, *persdelict* and *persbreidel*, were the outcome of changing political environments. As a component of the Penal Code, *persdelict* was a product of the liberal democratic idea, which put emphasis on legal governance. Democracy and liberalism had penetrated into the Dutch society since the 1880s, when the Netherlands started to democratize its own political system and introduced civic governance. It was also the time when the Indies was compelled to open itself to the world capitalist economy, and experienced the shift toward liberal politics. Under these politico-economic circumstances, the Indies government inevitably resorted to legal tools to maintain its authority and control over its territory. Under such a liberal atmosphere, administrative measures were thought to be undemocratic by the Dutch policy makers, thus the Penal Code was carefully formulated in legal terms and additions were made when necessary.

Being a colonial state, however, Dutch colonialism often asked in conservative way, oscillating between the promotion of free press and control over its subjects. Thus for the first three decades of the twentieth century, during what is known as the

the Governor-General, the Prosecutor General, and the Director of the Department of Justice. Mr. 128x/1933.

Ethical era, the colonial government employed conflicting policies in order to maintain peace and order. It was the time when the Indies state expanded its influence in the Outer Islands and carved out its new territory, coming closer to completing its imperial ambitions. The fact that all Governor-Generals between 1899 and 1916 were professional soldiers at some stage in their career is indicative of the Dutch expansionist agenda. At the same time, this was also the period when the indigenous people of the Indies were encouraged to express themselves through print and speech, an extension of the privilege that Dutch citizens in the liberal metropole had enjoyed. Such liberal policies however were problematic; the colonial authorities were very aware that free speech and press in the colonial setting were by nature precarious.

The international political circumstances brought about major changes in the Indies in the late 1910s. After Lenin gained control over Russia in 1917, the German emperor Wilhelm II abdicated in 1918, and the economic depression reached the Indies in the early 1920s, the Dutch society turned defensive and more conservative. Accordingly, the Netherlands government reorganized its intelligence activities both in its country and its colonies. In 1919 when the Netherlands formed the Central Intelligence Agency (*Centrale Inlichtingendienst*, CI), the Indies state also established PID.⁷⁴¹ Under PID, the Bureaus for Native and Arab, and for Chinese Affairs provided first-hand information on political activism to the Service. PID diligently gathered materials on leftwing (communist) and rightwing (Indonesian and Chinese nationalist) individuals and groups, and monitored their activities. Monitoring the vernacular press was one of the significant ways to survey those who were potentially dangerous. The colonial authorities used parts of the Penal Code – in particular the *persdelict* and *haatzaai-artikelen* – to restrict journalists, especially those who were

⁷⁴¹ For a general history of the Dutch police, see Cyrille Fijnaut, *A History of the Dutch Police* (Amsterdam: Boom 2008).

affiliated with radical political parties. This type of pressure successfully extinguished some radical newspapers. Many radical activists such as Semaoen and Tan Malaka were exiled to Europe, while Chinese activists who had connections with Kuomintang were deported to China. PID's activities were visible to the public, and were often reported in the vernacular press. In this way PID and the press formed a symbiotic relation where one became object of the other's trade (information gathering and reporting).

In the middle of the 1920s the Dutch parliament experienced power shift to the right.⁷⁴² In 1925, when the colonial authorities faced growing Indonesian radical movement, the Indies government added articles 153 *bis* and *ter* to the Penal Code to restrict any movement and discourse that might cause public insecurity. The political appointment of Governor-Generals also became increasingly right-leaning. Colonial pressures on political activists were more repressive in the 1920s than in the 1930s. The establishment of Boven Digoel as a political internment camp was in a sense a natural reaction when the colonial authorities were faced with unexpected communist uprisings. These changes culminated in the installation of administrative measure to control the press, that is, *persbreidel*. In the early 1930s, due to the effects of the Great Depression, financial insecurity, trade deficits, rapid influxes of Chinese and

⁷⁴² Generally, the interwar years in Europe experienced growing numbers of affinities and coalitions between conservatives and the radical right. The so-called "stable democracies" such as Great Britain, France, Belgium and the Netherlands also increasingly became conservative, widely supported by the lower middle classes and some higher echelons of society. In the case of the Netherlands, the younger generation of aristocrats turned to follow radical right movement because their political privilege had eventually gone after the 1917 parliamentary election. It had to do with a change in the electoral law in 1917, in which the constituency system was replaced by proportional representation. Since then, party allegiance counted for more than status or networks of local and regional notables. Hans de Valk, "Distance and Attraction: Dutch Aristocracy and the Political Right Wing," in Karina Urbach (ed.), *European Aristocracies and the Radical Right 1918-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 74-77. The proportional representation also created a new political scene where many small political parties emerged and competed, causing frequent changing alliances. Koen Vossen, *Vrij vissen in het Vondelpark: Kleine politieke partijen in Nederland 1918-1940* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2003). For a general tendency in Europe, see Martin Blinkhorn (ed.), *Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth-Century Europe* (London, Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990); Philip Morgan, *Fascism in Europe 1919-1945* (London: Routledge, 2003).

Japanese immigrants into the Indies, and the rise of the Axis powers, the Dutch politics turned hardline. Such domestic and international circumstances inevitably affected press censorship in the Indies.

The two types of press censorship deployed by the Indies government – *persdelict* and *persbreidel* – had three major differences. First of all, the policy intentions were different, even though both measures were aimed to control political vernacular press. *Persdelict* targeted individual journalists, whereas *persbreidel* was to warn and shut down troubling publishers. As an administrative measure, *persbreidel* aimed to control the society, whereas *persdelict* as a component of the Penal Code governed what constituted as an offence in order to punish its commission. The execution of *persdelict* through criminal trials is indicative of both the socialization of a supposed press offence and its punishment. Being part of the Penal Code, private individuals could invoke *persdelict* (*klachtdelict*); to defend themselves while local strongmen and influential families occasionally sued journalists for defamation. On the other hand, as an administrative measure, *persbreidel* was a prerogative of the government, unilaterally executed, without the possibility for appeal.

Second, the bureaucratic arrangements were different. *Persbreidel* was practiced at the national level, whereas *persdelict* was exercised at the local level. This difference is clear in terms of who made the final decision. The local criminal courts gave the ultimate verdict on *persdelict* cases. No higher courts or high-ranking colonial bureaucrats were involved. *Persdelict* was therefore limited to a local affair, and hence no state-wide administrative coordination existed. In the case of *persbreidel*, until 1934 the final decision was delivered by the Governor-General, although in the book the Council of the Netherlands Indies was to give the final push. After 1935 it was the Prosecutor General who decided which newspaper should be

suspended temporarily by *persbreidel*. Since *persbreidel* had to do with the matter of “national” security, it could not avoid being influenced by political changes at domestic and international levels.

Third, the consequences varied. As an administrative measure, the consequence of *persbreidel* was pre-determined, whereas the outcome of charges of *persdelict* was unpredictable. After the criminal trial, a *persdelict* charge could lead to a fine and/or imprisonment of the prosecuted journalist. But intriguingly, journalists learnt how to deal with *persdelict* and avoid especially the prison penalty. There were cases where blame was designed to fall onto junior colleagues (usually office boys) and stooges who were paid to spend time in jail.⁷⁴³ At the same time, the court trial also gave opportunity to journalists to defend themselves, to appeal, and occasionally to expose abuses of power and mistrial, leading to reduced sentences. On the other hand, *persbreidel* simply functioned as it was intended – the temporary suspension of troubling publishers. In eight years it was applied for 85 cases, which was a relatively small number to the numbers of periodicals circulated at the time. To avoid being suspended, which would bring economic damage, publishers of commercial newspapers became more cautious about their contents. In this way a kind of self-censorship worked among publishers, while those who did not cooperate were quickly shut down. Thus to a great extent, *persbreidel* was able to control its consequences.

Press censorship, whether restrictive or otherwise, brought intriguing consequences to the Malay print culture. It helped cultivated Malay print culture in different ways. In reality, since the 1900s, private popular reading materials had dominated the Malay print market, despite the state cultural project led by Balai Poestaka. Even *persdelict* promoted political journalism in the 1910s and 1920s.

⁷⁴³ A chief typesetter was blamed to have “misplaced” the incriminating article. *Sin Jit Po*, August 12, 1928.

Court trials became an object of press coverage, as well as entertaining reading/book materials. Unlike party organs, which tended to have strong ideological orientations, a neutral press also carried reports of *persdelict* cases as newsworthy. *Persbreidel* on the other hand, by short-circuiting the execution process, paved the way for alternative ways to write about and consume politics in the 1930s. The literary field became infused with political news, while new kinds of journals and publications emerged in place of political ones. Under the strict post-publication censorship, the Malay print culture actually flourished. Another factor in this flourishing of the print market in the Indies was that it was open to everyone regardless of race and politics. Among others, the Indies Chinese remained major producers and distributors of the Malay popular publications in the last four decades of Dutch colonialism. Because the print market was open, a large variety of publications became available. Obviously, a total suppression of the undesirable market was impossible for the colonial authorities. The Malay print power appeared to gain its strength and was unstoppable especially towards the end of the Dutch colonial era.

The World War II however fundamentally changed the situation of Malay print culture. In September 1939 the war in Europe broke out and had an impact on the way the Indies government conducted print censorship. In July 1940, less than a month after the Netherlands was occupied by the Nazi Germany, the Indies government decided to implement the censorship ordinance, signaling that internally the colony was “at war” before Japan even set foot in the territory. Its (re)action was understandable, considering signs of Japan’s southward expansion. In April 1940, the Japanese government expressed its concern over the possible effects of the war in Europe on the Netherlands Indies.⁷⁴⁴ As the Japanese Foreign Minister has said,

⁷⁴⁴ “Press Release Issued by the Japanese Embassy on April 15, 1940,” in United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United State: Japan: 1931-1941* (Volume 2) (Washington: United States Department of State, 1943), p. 281.

cooperation from the Indies was indispensable for the stability and prosperity of Asia.⁷⁴⁵ At the same time, the Japanese press was under the impression “that the Netherlands East Indies [government] had shown an unfriendly attitude towards [Japan],” and thus “made thinly veiled admonitions to the effect that the Netherlands East Indies should consider the danger to it of opposing its incorporation into the new ‘Co-prosperity Sphere’.”⁷⁴⁶

The shift to wartime censorship in July 1940 drastically changed the situation of print censorship. The Indies government ceased applying *persbreidel* altogether. The last *persbreidel* case took place in April 1940 against *Het Nationale Weekblad*. A Dutch language newspaper had made inflammatory remarks on ethnic relations in the Netherlands. But after May 1940 such a matter seemed trivial.⁷⁴⁷ Under the new circumstances, the Indies authorities would simply shut down troubling newspapers without even invoking *persbreidel*, as was the case with the Chinese-edition of *Tohindo Nippo* in May 1941.⁷⁴⁸ Only major news agencies like Reuters and Aneta were allowed to provide information on war-related affairs;⁷⁴⁹ nevertheless, news about the war was everywhere through printed media and radio.

Ironically, the war that fed it with news also killed the press industry in the Indies. The cause was primarily economic, due to paper shortage. In December 1941, the impotent Indies government announced that paper, including newsprint, must be

⁷⁴⁵ “Press Release Issued by the Japanese Embassy on April 15, 1940,” in United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United State*, p. 281.

⁷⁴⁶ “The Ambassador in Japan ([Joseph C.] Grew) to the Secretary of State,” in United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United State: Japan: 1931-1941* (Volume 2), p. 305. It is to be noted that by 1937 Japanese press also under military censorship. David C. Earhard, *Certain Victory: Images of World War II in the Japanese Media* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2008), pp. 89, 99, 108, 143.

⁷⁴⁷ At the end of Dutch colonialism, under the obvious war pressure, the Dutch tried to promote inter-racial cooperation in the Indies. Benedict Anderson, “Twilight Dogs-Jangled Nerves,” *Indonesia*, No. 73 (2002), pp. 129-144.

⁷⁴⁸ The Tripartite Pact among Germany, Italy, and Japan signed on September 27, 1940, demonstrated that Japan became an ally with Germany that currently occupied the Netherlands, and the most dangerous enemy for the Netherlands in Asia.

⁷⁴⁹ “Indonesia dalem geloombang perang: Censuur dan Publiciteit,” *Sin Tit Po*, July 22, 1940.

used frugally, and started regulating the distribution of paper to printing houses.⁷⁵⁰ The price of paper quickly rose. Many vernacular presses could not afford to buy newsprint, and simply ceased publication. The publishing business in the Indies underwent serious damage. But soon, the material shortage would not matter anymore, because the Indies print and press culture would be gone along with the colonial state that had given rise to it.

Soon after Japan began its military advance into the Netherlands Indies territory, the colonial government was shown out to be a paper tiger. On February 3, 1942, the Governor-General sent a message to regions that had fallen under Japan's siege, expressing his feeling of "great sadness" (*kesedihan besar*). His messages betrayed a loss of hope that the Indies might be saved.⁷⁵¹ The end of Dutch rule was only a matter of time. By April 1942, two months after Singapore fell, Japan had concluded its takeover of the Dutch colony.

The Japanese military regime ushered in a new era of censorship in Indonesia.⁷⁵² All censorship was pre-publication, and the publishing business was fully controlled. Prominent writers and journalists, along with leading nationalists and Islam activists, were mobilized for the new government's programs. Many Chinese journalists and writers who had been vocal critics of Japan's aggression in China

⁷⁵⁰ "Moesti Himat Kertas Koran" *Sin Tit Po*, December 16, 1941. At the same time, since December 8, 1941, interrogation by the colonial authorities to newspapers got worse. In his memoir, Oey Tiang Tjoei wrote that the newspaper under his directorship, *Hongpo*, had to endure extraordinary oppression. Almost every day the chief editor was summoned by the PID, while the Prosecutor General (in Oey's memoir was referred to as PG or Paling Goblok [Most Idiotic]) continued to "issue 'advice' (*prentah*) along with threats" that the newspaper would be closed down if the "advice" was not heeded. Oey Tiang Tjoei, *Pengalaman kita dalam pengasingan Garoet-Soekaboemi dan Noesakambangan*, p. 4.

⁷⁵¹ "G. G. bitjara: Pada Pendoedoe di Daerah Indonesia Jang Didoedoe ki Moesoe h," *Sin Tit Po*, February 4, 1942.

⁷⁵² Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1958); Aiko Kurasawa, "Mobilization and Control: A Study of Social Change in Rural Java, 1942-1945," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1988); Ken'ichi Goto, *Nihon Senryoki Indonesia Kenkyu* (Tokyo: Ryukei Shosha, 1989); Shigeru Sato, *War, Nationalism, and Peasants: Java under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1994).

found themselves arrested or intimidated. Others had little choice but to cooperate with the authority.⁷⁵³ Popular print market was replaced with state-controlled publishing. The print power that journalists and writers had enjoyed during the colonial days was gone. Instead, the Japanese occupation was now laying the basis for the future print culture in Indonesia, where neither ethnic nor local popular literature would find room to survive.

⁷⁵³ Tjamboek Berdoeri, *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara* (Malang: ELKASA, 2004); Kwee Kek Beng, *Doea Poeloe Lima Tahon sebagai Wartawan*, pp. 73-96.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Expansion of Railways in the Nineteenth Century Indies

opening year	route(s)	distance (km)
1868	Semarang Goedang-Tanggoeng	9
1868	Tanggoeng-Kedoengdjati	2
1870	Semarang Goedang-Oostzijda Havenkanaal	74
1872	Kedoengdjati-Soerakarta	58
1872	Gambir-Mester Cornelis	6
1873	Soerakarta-Jogjakarta	37
1873	Mester Cornelis-Buitenzorg	44
1881	Buitenzorg-Tjitjoeroeng	27
1882	Tjitjoeroeng-Soekaboemi	31
1883	Soekaboemi-Tjiandjoer	39
1883	Semarang-Genoek	6
1883	Genoek-Demak	18
1883	Batavia-Harmonie	4
1883	Harmonie-Kramat	4
1884	Kramat-Mester Cornelis	4
1884	Demak-Koedoes	26
1884	Koedoes-Pati	23
1884	Pati-Joana	14
1884	Poerwodadi-Goendih	17
1884	Tjiandjoer-Bandoeng	60
1884	Bandoeng-Tjitjalengka	27
1885	Batavia-Priok	9
1885	Tegal-Slawi	14
1886	Slawi-Balapoelang	10
1887	Jogjakarta-Tjilatjap	176
1887	Koetardjoe-Poerworedjo	12
1887	Batavia-Bekas	27
1887	Koedoes-Majong	13
1888	Demak-Godong	21
1889	Godong-Poerwadadi	17
1889	Poerwadadi-Wirosari	22
1889	Ujung-Benteng	3
1889	Modjokerto Kali-Modjoagoeng	17
1890	Benteng-Benteng	2
1890	Modjoagoeng-Ngoro	17

1890	Wonokromo-Sepandjang	7
Appendix 1 (Continued)		
1890	Bekasi-Tjikarang	17
1891	Tjikarang-Kedoeng Gede	13
1891	Mester Cornelis-Kampoeng Melajoe	1
1891	Poeloeajer-Padangpandjang	71
1891	Padangpandjang-Bukittinggi	19
1892	Padangpandjang-Solok	53
1892	Solok-Moearakalaban	23
1892	Solok-Moearakalaban	7
1892	Gemekan-Dinojo	8
1893	Tjibatoe-Tasikmalaja	56
1893	Wirosari-Koendoeran	18
1894	Koendoeran-Ngawen	10
1894	Ngawen-Blora	15
1894	Tasikmalaja-Kasoegihan	118
1894	Padang-Emmahavn	4
1895	Kedoengdjati-Ambarawa	23
1895	Majong-Patjangaan	10
1896	Moearakalaban-Sawahlunto	33
1896	Maos-Poerwokerto	29
1896	Poerwokerto-Soekaradja	9
1896	Pasoeroean-Waroengdowo	6
1896	Pasoeroean-Boom	2
1897	Waroengdowo-Bekasi	10
1897	Wonoredjo-Bakalan	4
1897	Soekaradja-Poerwokerto	16
1897	Semarang Barat-Kaliwoengoe	19
1897	Kalibodri-Weleri	9
1897	Tegal-Brebes	12
1897	Mundu-Tjirebon	6
1897	Losari-Tjiledoeg	12
1897	Tjiledoeg-Sidanglaut	18
1897	Sidanglaut-Mundu	10
1897	Pelaboehan-Semarang	5
1897	Djombang-Kediri	50
1897	Pesantren-Waters	14
1897	Pelem-Papar	14
1897	Malang-Boeloelawang	11
1897	Djati-Gending	10
1897	Gending-Djaboeng	19
1897	Probolinggo-Djati	1
1898	Djaboeng-Phoeton	5
1898	Boeloelawang-Gondanglegi	12

1898	Gondanglegi-Talok	7
Appendix 1 (Continued)		
1898	Paree-Kentjong	4.4
1898	Paree-Kepoeng	12.4
1898	Weleri-Pekaongan	49
1898	Pemalang-Tegal	29
1898	Brebes-Losari	28
1898	Jombangpasar-Jombang lin Raja	3
1898	Kedoeng Gede-Krawang	6
1898	Jogjakarta-Magelang	27
1898	Wirosari-Kradenan	8
1898	Poerworedjo-Bandjarnegara	30
1898	Sepandjang-Krian	7
1898	Poeloradjo-Ngoro	6
1898	Porong-Modjokerto	38
1898	Djapanan-Pandaan	11
1898	Kamal-Bangkalan	18
1899	Bankalan-Tandjoeng	5
1899	Tambangan-Kalianget	20
1899	Waroengdowo-Wonoredjo	11
1899	Patjing-Pohdjedjer	15
1899	Talok-Dampit	8
1899	Ngoro-Kandangan	7
1899	Kentjong-Kadangan	5.8
1899	Goerah-Kawarasan	9
1899	Joana-Trangkil	8.2
1899	Trangkil-Boeloemanis	7.5
1899	Pekalongan-Pemalang	34
1899	Babat-Plosso	10
1899	Batavia-Doeri-Tangerang	23
1899	Doeri-Rangkasbetoeng	76
1899	Harmonie-Kabonbinatang	5
1899	Kabonbinatang-Lipauersweg	2
1900	Lipauersweg-Batavia	5
1900	Gondanglegi-Kepandjen	17
1900	Toempang-Singosari	23
1900	Rangkasbetoeng-Serang	34
1900	Serang-Anjer Kidoel	42
1900	Gundih-Kradenan	37
1900	Babat-Lamongan	28
1900	Lamongan-Soerabaja	41
1900	Boeloemanis-Tajoe	8.8
1900	Joana-Lasem	34
1900	Majong-Welahan	6

1900	Bandjarnegera-Poerbolingo	7
Appendix 1 (Continued)		
1900	Bakalan-Pasar Alkmaar	4
1900	Tandjoeng-Kwanjar	22
1900	Tandjoeng-Kapedi	45
1900	Kapedi-Tambangan	24
	TOTAL DISTANCE (KM)	2607.1
[Source: Tim Telaga Bakti Nusantara, <i>Sejarah Perkeretaapian Indonesia, Jilid 1</i> (Bandung: Angkasa, 1997), pp. 164-178.]		

Appendix 2: The Number of Publications in Malay (1871-1942)

	Indies Chinese	Balai Poestaka	Indigenous Publishers
1871	1		
1872	---		
1873	---		
1874	---		
1875	---		
1876	1		
1877	1		
1878	1		
1879	---		
1880	---		
1881	1		
1882	2		
1883	6		
1884	41		
1885	18		
1886	26		
1887	16		
1888	8		
1889	3		
1890	18		
1891	39		
1892	4		
1893	3		
1894	40		
1895	---		
1896	19		
1897	28		
1898	19		
1899	20		
1900	7		
1901	26		
1902	53		1
1903	54		
1904	36		
1905	7		1
1906	5		
1907	6		
1908	36		
1909	22		1

1910	125		
Appendix 2 (Continued)			
1911	34	3	
1912	135	5	
1913	80	6	
1914	44	4	
1915	49	4	
1916	51	5	
1917	87		
1918	104		1
1919	142		2
1920	128		1
1921	166		5
1922	81		
1923	168		
1924	137		
1925	114	25	
1926	47	23	3
1927	48	29	1
1928	44	42	2
1929	53	35	9
1930	119	30	11
1931	142	47	2
1932	101	51	1
1933	117	24	6
1934	91	20	2
1935	148	24	10
1936	89	17	15
1937	135	31	39
1938	143	50	65
1939	144	34	117
1940	122	64	131
1941	96	55	103
1942	17	5	12

[My computation is based on the following sources: Salmon, *Literature in Malay by the Chinese in Indonesia*; Balai Pustaka, *Balai Pustaka*; G. Ockeloen, *Catalogus dari Buku-Buku yang Diterbitkan di Indonesia, 1937-1941, Djilid 2: Buku dalam Bahasa Melaju, Djawa, d.l.l* (Bandung: G. Kolff & Co., 1950)]

Appendix 3: Chinese Newspapers in the Indies (1939)

City	Name	Language	Orientation	Ownership	Manager	Chief Editor	Circulation	Information
Batavia	<i>Sin Po</i>	C (Evening)	Three Principles of the People	Sin Po			Before 1937 5,000-6,000; After 1937 9,000	Established in 1921. The most influential Chinese paper, its subscribers all over the Indies. Anti-Japanese agitation, promotion of patriotism and donation. Many Henanese as editors. Subscription fee f7.50 for three months.
	<i>Sin Po</i>	M (Evening)	Three Principles of the People	Sin Po			6,000	Pioneer of Chinese-Malay paper. Anti-Japanese stance. Kwee Kek Beng initiated Sin Po, a Java-born Hokkianese with Dutch education.
	<i>Thien Sung Yit Po</i>	C	Three Principles of the People (Kuomintang's organ)	N.V. Handel Mij Drukkerij en Dagblad			Before 1937 3,000; After 1937 4,000-5,000	Established in 1921. Kuomintang's organ, f300/month subsidy from the Consulate General of China. Anti-Japanese stance. Editors often arrested and deported. Frequently temporary shut down. Due to its anti-Japanese article shut down for 8 days in June 1937. Subscription fee f7.50 for three months.
	<i>Sian Po</i>	M (Evening)	M (Evening)	Hoa Kiao In Kiok			2,000	Established in 1902. Former Perniagaan. Less nationalistic than Sin Po. Since 1937 increasingly anti-Japanese stance.
	<i>Keng Po</i>	M					3,000	Its opinion similar to Sian Po, but anti-Sian Po. Strong anti-Japanese stance. Recently warned by authorities.
	<i>Kong Siang Djit Po</i>	C						Established 1922
	<i>Chuan Min Yit Po</i>	C						Established 1926
	<i>Kei Hoa Po (?)</i>	C/M	C/M		Khoe Woen Sioe		2,000	
	<i>Kong Hoa Po</i>	C/M	C/M		Phoe Liang Gie		1,500	
	<i>Ho Suk Min Kok Yit Po</i>	C						

Appendix 3 (Continued)								
Semarang	<i>Mata Hari</i>	M	Pro-Japan		Kwee Hing Jiat	Kwee Hing Jiat	4,000	Oei Tiong Ham Concern (capital f200,000). Kwee Hing Jiat is Hokkienese
	<i>Soeara Semarang</i>	M	Neutral		Jja Kiang Si	K.C. Chan, Tan Boen Twan	2,000	Tja Kiang Si has ownership. Its capital is f100,000. In 1936 it bought Djawa Tengah and changed to Soeara Semarang. Commercial oriented.
	<i>Warna Warta</i>	M						
	<i>Tiong Nam Yit Po</i>	C	Three Principles of the People	Kuomintang branch				Established in 1926.
	<i>Tai Kong Siang Po</i>	C	Three Principles of the People		Yap See	Lie Kong Hie	4,000	Established 1930. Most influential Chinese language newspaper. Since 1937 aggressively anti-Japanese. Due to public security, got several warnings and in May 1939 being shut down for two weeks.
Soerabaja	<i>Siang Po</i>	C	Three Principles of the People				1,500	Yap See and Lie Kong Hie are Hokkienese.
	<i>Pewart Soerabaja</i>	M	Three Principles of the People		The Kiang Sing	The Ping Oen	8,000	Established in 1921. Upper class subscribers. After 1937 anti-Japanese stance. The Ping Oen is Dutch-educated Fukkienese. The Kiang Siang is his uncle.
	<i>Sin Tippo</i>	M	Three Principles of the People			Liem Sang Tjiang	4,000	Established in 1924. Liem Sang Tjiang is Fukkienese. Moderate paper.
	<i>Soeara Publiek</i>	N	Three Principles of the People					
	<i>Se Kang Yit Po</i>	C	Three Principles of the People					Established in 1925.
Makassar	<i>Min Sei Po (?)</i>	C	organ of Kuomintang branch					Established in 1927.
	<i>Kai Jo Shu Po</i>	C	Three Principles of the People					Ceased to exist.
	<i>Fikiran</i>	M/C					1,000	
Menado	<i>Sumatra Bin Po</i>	C (Evening)	Three Principles of the People		Yap Ee Chong	Chu Chien Cheoon	2,000	Established in 1913. Anti-Japanese stance. Yap Ee Chong is the most influential Kuomintang member in Sumatra and strong anti-Japanese orientation.

Appendix 3 (Continued)								
Medan	<i>New China</i>	M (Evening)	Three Principles of the People	New China	Lim Few Bie	Khoo Soo Sie, Yong Kuo Hui	1,800	Established in 1929. Its reports and influences are less than those of Sumatra Bin Po.
	<i>Andalas</i>	M					1,500	
	<i>Sinar Sumatra</i>	M	Neutral	Sinar Sumatra	Kho Tiauwan, A. Gaban	Oei Goan Po, Boerhano eddin, Marah Alief, Lim Phie Kiat	1,500	Used to be strong sympathiser of Indonesian nationalism. Due to financial difficulty, received Chinese capital. Accurate reports on development in China. Subscription fee is f6.75 for three months.
Padang	<i>Radio</i>	M					1,000	

[Source: Mantetsu Toua Keizai Chosakyoku, *Ranryo Indo Niokeru Kakyō* (Tokyo: Mantetsu Toua Keizai Chosakyoku, 1940), pp. 332-339]

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GLOSSARY

adat	tradition, customs
Balai Poestaka	Bureau for Popular Literature or Volkslectuur
Bodie Oetomo	Noble Endeavor
boepati	indigenous regent
Dinijjah schools	private systems of modern elementary and secondary school originated and developed in West Sumatra
haatzaai-artikelen	hate-sowing articles
Indische Partij	Indies Party
Indische Vereeniging	Indies (Students) Association
Indo	Eurasian
Kapitan (Cina)	a civil official appointed by the colonial authorities to oversee local Chinese community
Kuomintang	Chinese Nationalist Party in China
Kweekschool	Teacher's Training School
Landraad	District Court
peranakan	local-born mix-blood Chinese, who were generally Malay or Javanese-speaking; indigenized Chinese
persdelict	press offence
Poedjangga Baroe	The New Literati, a small group of Dutch-educated young Indonesian writers, who created the journal <i>Poedjangga Baroe</i> in the Indonesian language
Raad van Nederlandsch-Indië	Council of the Netherlands Indies
Raad van Justitie	Court of Appeal

Rechtshogeschool	Law College
roman pitjisan	dime novels
Sarikat Prijaji	Aristocrats Association
spreekdelict	speech offence
Sumatra Thawalib schools	private systems of modern elementary and secondary school originated and developed in West Sumatra
totok Chinese	more recent immigrants to the Indies without local “blood,” and whose mother tongues were various Chinese dialects
Volksraad	People’s Council in the Indies established in 1918
Wedono	middle-ranking official of the native territorial bureaucrat